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# TOWN AND GOWN

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LYNN MONTROSS *and*  
LOIS SEYSTER MONTROSS



# TOWN AND GOWN

BY

LYNN MONTROSS

*and*

LOIS SEYSTER MONTROSS



NEW YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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TOWN AND GOWN. I

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FEB - 8 '23

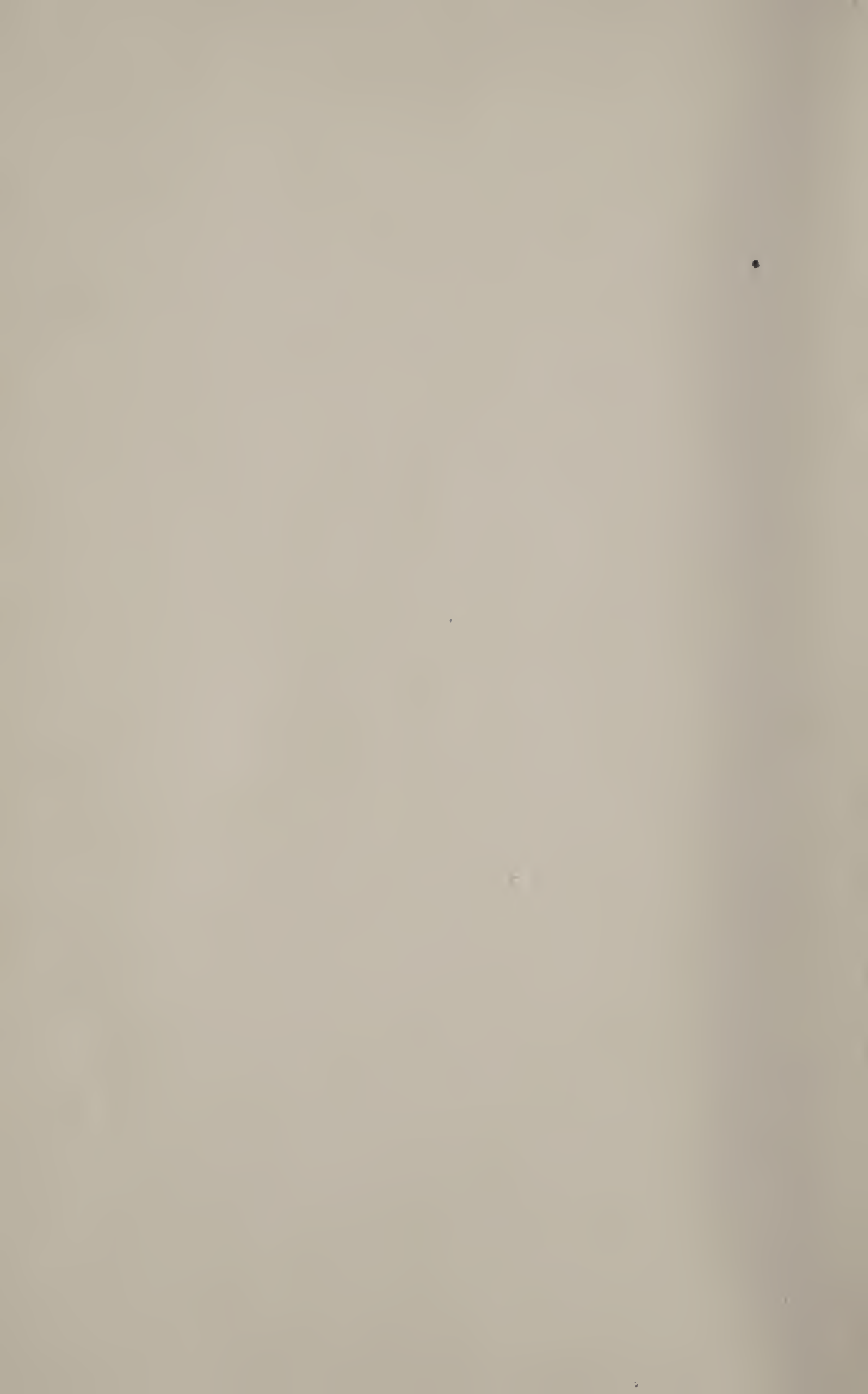
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## FOREWORD

*Town and Gown* is an attempt at collaboration in character and incident rather than in style. The episodes "Peter Warshaw," "The Faculty and the Creaking Shirt," "Girls Who Pet," "The Strangest Serenade" and "A Blind Date, Cousin Lottie and The Cat" were written by Lois Seyster Montross, the remaining episodes by Lynn Montross.



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*First Episode:*

PETER WARSHAW

From the University Catalogue:

*“After completing the requirements  
of his course, the student may be-  
come a candidate for graduation.”*



## I: *Peter Warshaw*

### I

**I**N order to understand the later Peter Warshaw, it would be necessary to recall his great-great (paternal) grandfather, Nork Hutter, who was a Dutch artist, and his great-great-great (maternal) grandmother, who eloped from Dublin with an English adventurer. But to understand the Peter Warshaw who grumblingly attended his own farewell party the night before he left Maybury for the State University one need only glance at his direct antecedents: old Doctor Warshaw and his wife seated comfortably in rockers enjoying the lap supper. The old "Doc" was telling an anecdote to Archie Gibbs on his right. It was not so much an anecdote as an interminable scientific treatise, and Archie was yawning through the references to homeopathy, gelsemium, belladonna and the New School. Doc Warshaw paused occasionally to sip his coffee with long, audible slops. Mrs. Warshaw looked annoyed and exaggerated the politeness of her

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own delicate sips, crooking out her little finger on the handle of the cup.

She was a large woman who wore squeaking corsets and surprisingly small, high-heeled, patent leather slippers. Due to her efficient management the Foreign Missionary Society always made money at its annual suppers. She was known in Maybury as something of an artist, too, for she did china painting and made rose beads. She also coached the senior play.

The doctor seldom accompanied her to any of her affairs, not even to the Presbyterian church where she sang a heavy and correct alto in the quartet. He was to be seen every evening between seven and ten in his stuffy, dirty office on Front Street, reading by a smoky kerosene lamp. He read only newspapers and huge volumes on medicine. He surreptitiously chewed tobacco. His office was a drugstore, too, but he always advised his few customers against any of the patent medicines advertised in the windows. Most people went to the brilliantly lighted place up the street—"Foxy's" newly remodeled drugstore and confectionery with its elaborate soda fountain. The Doc, absorbed in his study, was unconscious that Maybury had long ago left him behind, that it referred to him as an "old character" and a "back number," although it admitted his erudition. He still kept second hand books

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for sale, lace valentines, bisque dolls, tarnished silver brushes, jewel boxes on faded plush.

His battered, splint-bottom chair stood between a rusty Franklin stove and a three-legged table with the smoking lamp. Passers-by this evening on Front Street must have missed his gray head with its matted, square-cut beard, in the circle of lamplight—Mrs. Warshaw had actually succeeded in keeping him home for Peter's farewell party.

And Peter—he stood between the piano and the chenille rope portières of the double room balancing a coffee cup in one hand and holding a sandwich in the other. Like his father he was dressed carelessly; he wore a badly pressed blue flannel suit, a wide maroon tie that made his freckled face look redder and his stubborn hair more tawny.

In those cycles of boyhood nicknames that arise suddenly and recede into oblivion he had been called "Skinny" for his thin legs and arms, "Monk" for his marked imitative ability and "Possum" to denote a certain deceptive sleepiness. And now he was just Pete Warshaw, who played a good game of pool and a better game of basket ball, who still dried dishes for his mother, took her to choir practice, smoked moodily with loiterers at Foxy's, derided girls and would not learn to dance. He stubbornly refused to play for those



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who danced, to play any kind of ragtime. If his crowd (Boss Huff, Fat Carlson, Fish Gardner, Genevieve McCarthy, Elaine Ross) insisted on his playing they had to listen to endless minors, the uncomprehended chords of Grieg and Chopin. Maybury expected him to have talent, for his mother was referred to by visiting lecturers who stayed at the Warshaw home as "their cultured hostess"; and the town was not astonished at his good marks in school for it considered Doc Warshaw "deep." No, he had not been notable in Maybury.

This night he found himself in an unaccustomed spotlight. He was going away to school. Genevieve McCarthy had attended normal school and Boss Huff had taken a business course in Naponee, but Peter Warshaw was the first to be sent to the State University from Maybury.

"Presume," said Fish Gardner's father, "that Warshaw'll make a doctor out of Pete. Seems to me a year in Chicago with what Pete knows already would have been enough."

"Well, he ain't going to take up medicine right away," said Archie Gibbs. "Anyhow the Doc said he wasn't. He is going down to the University to find out what he wants to do. Mighty expensive findin' out, if you ask me!"

Peter, eating sandwiches with obvious appetite, was oblivious to the fact that he was noteworthy



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and that his mother was confiding to Mrs. Huff:

“County Superintendent Morrissey told us Peter was really unusual and he ought to go to the State University. And Father said he felt that right along. . . . Wednesday is registration . . . we got him a new wardrobe trunk. He goes on that 9:23 tomorrow. I had a terrible time packing—he’s *so* helpless, just like his father. . . . Honestly, Mrs. Huff, it’s worth all the sacrifices to give them these opportunities. We can’t help but expect big things of Peter with such a wonderful chance.”

### II

Doc Warshaw, in a night shirt and his old green bathrobe was rummaging in the closet for the coat-hanger his wife had said he must find for his best suit. She was standing by the walnut dresser, twisting up her hair on kid curlers. In her long nightgown with the square neck and scalloped sleeves she was no longer the dignified and correct Mrs. T. D. Warshaw—she was a plump, middle-aged woman and there were worried lines around her eyes.

“It seems queer that Peter’s going tomorrow. I simply can’t realize it. I hope he finds a nice room. What do you suppose rooms cost down there?”

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Doc Warshaw sat on the bed, absently fitting the suit over the hanger.

“Why, not more than about twenty a month, I’d say, Nellie. Still worrying for fear he won’t have enough money?”

“We-ll—no—” She touched her finger with her tongue and rubbed the finger along a short strand of hair. “If he doesn’t—” she rolled the strand around a curler, “—there’s the new oats from the farm—” she pressed down the ends of the curler emphatically, “—I hope we get a good price for ’em.”

Doc Warshaw had placed the suit carelessly on a chair and was climbing with tired grunts into the high bed. His wife hung his suit in the closet without remonstrating.

“Peter’s always been a good boy,” she said.

“Yep. . . . Time is it?”

“After twelve. . . . Did you put the cat in the basement?” She was raising the window. “I heard the Huff boy has a good position in Chicago as an office manager. . . . Peter told me tonight he wanted to take up business. Would you care if he gave up being a doctor?”

“Nope, wouldn’t care,” said the Doc, yawning. “Not if he was a bully good business man. And Peter will be once he sets himself at it.”

In the dark she found her side of the bed and clambered in with surprising agility.

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“Yes, Peter will be. He will be,” she echoed, vague with sleepiness. They both turned over. In the sudden silence the clock ticked loudly.

### III

On the 7:23 train Peter was rapidly nearing the State University. Between his eyes and the page of his magazine a hazy panorama of Maybury faces still flickered: Archie Gibbs, Mrs. Huff, Fish Gardner, his mother smiling with exaggerated cheerfulness, his father stroking his beard and reading a timetable.

Tonight at supper they would say, “Well, he’s registered now. He’s got his room now.”

They had no idea what the State University would be like—but neither had Peter. He had never been down there and if he pictured it his imagination employed scenes from books he had read: convivial men students strolling arm-in-arm along shady paths, singing; men in night shirts jigging on a tin roof by moonlight (a reminiscence of *Old Siwash* stories); a group of low-voiced men discussing campus politics gravely over pipes and steins (remembering *Stover At Yale*); an alumni banquet at which the millionaire toastmaster toasted a little, shabby, insignificant man for his courage in sickness and poverty (*The Man In The Shadow*).

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. . . Across the aisle four fellows were playing cards. A certain brush to their hair, something about their collars, made him sure they were University men. Juniors—seniors, maybe. He caught snatches—

“Going to sign up that pipe with old Gabler I told you about?”

“—old Dyrcks’ course’s soft enough to suit me.”

“—take it from me, Protheroe, old Irene will go D. G. Damned good material!”

“—who’s this frosh from Clinton that broke the two-twenty? I heard the A. T. O.’s had him all lined up.”

“—good as pledged now.”

“—b’lie me, old Pewter Hughes’ll show up Chi *this* year! Goddam good halfback.”

They looked younger than he had supposed upper classmen would look. They hadn’t that dignity he’d expected. Where was the difference between them and Fish Gardner and Fat Carlson and Boss Huff? But he envied them their glib references to the “old school”—everything was “old,” he noted, from professors to flappers.

There were two girls seating themselves ahead of him. Co-eds, he supposed. They wore low-heeled, strap slippers, chiffon silk stockings, fur coats and close hats over bobbed hair. Where  
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was the difference between them and Genevieve McCarthy or Elaine Ross?

Now and then they exchanged remarks with the group across the aisle:

“—say, Andy, did you hear the dirt about Patsy Perdue?”

“—no, but I heard the dirt on your house, Dot. Faking telegrams to rushees!”

“—back again are you, Dot? This makes six years, huh, Dot?”

“—hi, Dot, how many weeks ahead are y’ dated up?”

The girl called Dot was poised and sophisticated. Her voice was husky and somewhat strident.

Turning again to his magazine he tried to forget his shut-out feeling. A queer emotion of discomfort was rising in him—a worried feeling such as he had in the night once, waking and remembering a ten dollar bill he had lost. He could scarcely analyze it for he was unused to self-dissection. It seemed to have something to do with the snatches of talk he’d overheard—a fear of being surrounded by people like these who talked this way—a guilty dread that he would never be able to hold his ground—to understand the enigmas of “D. G.” and “A. T. O.”—to be properly flippant and have that indefinable something in his grooming—that he would be the only

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freshman—the only unknown—the only person looking through the fence at the breath-taking game inside.

### IV

Peter was one of a huge phalanx of students waiting to get into University Hall. Although he was late in starting to register he found that the crowds were late too. He heard grumbling all about him: juniors roundly damning the university officials; girls explaining that it was always this way, they were nearly dead, darn it; seniors advising freshmen how to avoid red tape and bluff through by faking signatures of instructors on class cards.

Peter stood silent, gripping his announcement of courses. When the mob at last surged forward he was jostled up stone steps and into the old, shabby corridors of the hall. He saw desks at which pretty, important girls presided, with stacks of pink and blue cards before them. White placards posted above doors designated the formidable lairs of advisers. Peter was red-faced and almost tremulous by the time he secured his long folding blank and stood before his adviser, Mr. Whitney, to be aided in making out his "trial study list." His timidity was dispelled. Whitney was young, with thick, waving black hair parted in the middle; he had mild brown eyes and a small

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black mustache. Peter sat on the edge of a chair beside his desk and said "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," at the proper intervals.

"There, Mr.—ah—Warshaw—" The instructor was through. "Have that approved by Dean Fannicott—third floor of this building—at your left. All right, next."

Their eyes met and Whitney smiled. Peter went away feeling warm and friendly. He hoped he would see Whitney often. On the third floor in Fannicott's office his timidity returned. The assistant dean of the department of English seemed to have a bad cold and to hold Peter somehow responsible. As he read Peter's list of studies, he coughed, unfolded his handkerchief, took a cough-drop. He started to sign his initials, paused and shoved the blank at Peter.

"That won't do," he said. "Your military drill will conflict with that chemistry laboratory on Fridays. Mr. Whitney should have known that. Have him change it and bring it to me again."

At last Peter sat in the draughty hall in a chair with a broad arm, copying his approved study list carefully. He realized all at once that he was not in the College of Commerce at all but in Liberal Arts and Sciences. . . . Funny he hadn't known—he hadn't understood. And what must he do to change? He would have to go back to Fannicott and the dean would look disgusted at his im-



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becility. He *was* an imbecile! The blood rushed to his face and he chewed his fountain pen cap fiercely. Rather than face Fannicott for the third time he decided to keep on in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. He wanted only to leave this confused clatter.

Through the door he saw the white walks winding across smooth, rolling green, the broad, mottled foliage of cannas, the oaks yielding golden leaves reluctantly to the insistent Autumn. Sunlight crept with little, wavering steps over the grass . . . next to him a girl was writing "Elizabeth Udell" on the long series of perforated slips. She was scribbling "None" where it said "Church Preference" and leaving a blank after "Father's Occupation."

The passing and repassing of students was dizzying. Fur-coated co-eds with rouged cheeks; men wearing bone-rimmed glasses; an instructor or two hurrying by with green bags in hand; Chinese students in groups; two colored girls, hesitant and self-effacing; couples who sauntered, gayly glancing about for acquaintances; the girl he had heard called "Dot" accompanied by two men; and freshmen like himself, bewildered, self-conscious, frowning over the brown-covered announcement of courses.

His registration completed, he walked south toward the auditorium. He faced a greensward  
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that had once been a waving sea of prairie grass where the hoofs of buffaloes pounded. Austere buildings, dull-red with white pillars, against a blue satin sky piled with lustrous clouds. . . . He wanted to throw himself on his back in the grass and, looking at that sky, forget how very much he hated everything.

### V

Peter sat at a baize-topped study table beneath a green-shaded electric bulb. The room with its affronting dressers, its brass bed and faded rug seemed cozy now with a familiar litter of coats and shoes, trunks covered with Indian rugs, walls thumb-tacked with penciled cartoons and photographs of women; a tennis racket, a cocky plaid bag of golf sticks; a huge, smirking *papier maché* god in the corner. The room, Jimmy Tradinick had said, was "so-so" but after his arrangements he pronounced it "not so worse." The golf sticks, the Navajo rugs, the steamer trunk, the cartoons, the photographs, and the *papier maché* god were his. The new wardrobe trunk, the tennis racket, the one apologetic pennant were Peter's.

After waiting doggedly in the Y. M. C. A. for hours on being informed there were no vacant rooms on the campus, Peter heard Tradinick asking for a roommate. Fortunately Jimmy had

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found Peter satisfactory and here they were. Peter thought himself immensely lucky.

He discovered his roommate to be something between a sophomore and a junior, Jimmy confessed he didn't know which. He confessed all sorts of things on their walk to the rooming house. He drawled much careless speech tagged with "eh," "y'see," "do y'ree-lly," and "as t'were." He had been everywhere, he said; he was bored. He thought the University stupid. He quarreled with his fraternity brothers and wouldn't live with them.

"You'll be sick of me in a week," he warned Peter.

Tonight, while Peter surveyed his new books and his ream of unsullied note paper, he felt at peace. He smoked a cigarette and gazed drowsily at the green-shaded light while Jimmy talked.

Jimmy lay on the bed in one-half of his pajamas, his brown legs stretched out at length. He had a habit of going about in startling unattire and of resting to smoke and talk in the middle of his searches for misplaced clothes.

"I can tell y'a lot of things about this university," he was saying, "that you'd only learn by devilish moil an' toil, my boy." He called everyone "my boy"—it was rumored that he had even said it to the dean of men—and he was fond, too,

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of referring sadly to all forms of labor as “moil an’ toil.”

“You don’t want to take it all so damn seriously. Youth is always fed a lot of bunkum and stinkum about ‘making the most of golden opportunities.’ The moralists get all that up to keep other people from enjoying themselves. Take these deans and doctors and professors and what-nots—they’ll throw y’ the gaff. Sure. They’re paid for it. But you notice it’s the dumb-bell flappers they award the golden ‘A’s.’ Takes the old boys to fall for the cuties.” He lit another cigarette.

“They’re made of the same stuff, even as you and I, my boy. Give ’em a cuspidor and a package of fine cut and they’ll react like your father an’ mine, as ’twere. . . . Take these prominent birds who put the stew in student activities—Andy Protheroe and Pewter Hughes—asses and jelly beans! Where do they get with their toilin’ an’ moilin’. . . . Ah—a jug of wine, a book of verse, and thou—our old Friend Omar has it right, eh?”

He stretched and was silent.

Peter smiled contentedly and looked at the student lamp. A few disconnected words—cuspidor, asses, jelly beans, a jug of wine—echoed richly in his ears.



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## VI

The Peter Warshaw who returned to Maybury after one year of University life was a Peter of well-pressed clothes, unfamiliar cosmetics and a strange, new, lounging gait. Under Jimmy Tradinick's tutelage he had acquired no small nonchalance and a modicum of social presence. He no longer blushed and stammered if spoken to by a girl and he played ragtime now for dancers although he did not dance himself. His mother noted most of these things with approval.

She had a little talk with him the morning after his arrival. He was seated at the round dining table eating a late breakfast. She hurried back and forth from the kitchen balancing new batches of hot pancakes on a long turner. He dotted them with butter and drowned them in maple syrup. He placed his knife on the side of his plate now instead of putting it on the table cloth.

"Honestly, Peter," said his mother, "University has been a fine thing for you all around, hasn't it?" She stood behind him and gave a few smoothing pats to his hair.

"Yeh," said Peter, grinning. "Y'ought to see old Tradinick, though. By gosh, he's a card! He's been everywhere an' he's bored. Talk! That fellow can talk an arm off you. Gee,  
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Mother, I never had an idea there were fellows like that.”

She had heard all this before in letters and on his brief visits home but she smiled with cleverly feigned interest.

“I know I’d like him. Why don’t you have him come to see you, some time?”

“Oh, well—y’see, Tradinick has lots of money—he’d hardly want to waste his time in a cheap joint like this burg. D’y’think?”

“N-no—maybe not. I’m sure we always try to be nice to your friends.” She was a little awed by this Jimmy with the “lots of money.” But she was pleased that Peter should “be in with” people like that. She wanted Peter to realize the cheapness and smallness of Maybury. She had visions of him returning from Chicago or New York in an English ulster and a velour hat, carrying a sleek bag—very dignified, a bit pompous and yet extremely gracious, sweeping her into his arms with the exclamation, “Little mother!” then sitting down to outline to her the colossal schemes of his big business in the East.

Just yet he was still Peter, freckled, red-haired, ingenuous—underneath all his new politeness and eager boasting. She had been amused and pleased when he arose every time she entered the room that first night, vain of this youthful hom-

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age before the Doc, sprawled on the couch with stockinged feet.

The doctor came in while Peter was talking. Peter had lit a cigarette and his mother was ignoring the fact that she never used to permit his smoking in the house.

"Yeh, Mother," he was saying, "I sure get by better than I used to. Honest, when I first went there the place seemed so darn big—not the town, the town is horrible—but the campus an' all that. Y'ought t'see the You'll Come Inn—Foxy's is a joke to it—slick little booths and parchment shades and a bird walking up and down playing the violin. Jimmy and I hang out there a lot."

Doctor Warshaw sat down near the door and stroked his beard.

"I'll tell you who runs the school—Andy Protheroe and Pewter Hughes—big men! Tradinick says they're not but, Lord, you can't tell by Jimmy! He damns everything from A to Z. 'Stinkum and bunkum!' he says, you'd die to hear him. He's in Mexico this summer. I'm keen to hear the line he'll come back with. Gosh, I'll be bored here this summer! Hardly wait for next fall."

He blew smoke from his nostrils slowly. "After all," he said, "you do learn a lot of worthwhile things down there. Not from your books, y'know, but from fellows like Pewter Hughes and

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Tradinick—I met Pewter one night down at You'll Come Inn—the best halfback we ever had. But you take Jimmy now—contact with a man like that,” he was very earnest; he let his cigarette go out, “say, I even sort of like verse now. He can reel off Kipling and Service and Omar Khayyam by the yard. Listen to this, Mother:—” He pulled out a leather book, pocket-size, and read half-aloud:

A jug of Wine, a book of Verse and Thou  
Beside me, singing in the Wilderness,  
O, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

. . . Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring  
Your winter garment of Repentance fling—

He was reading to himself now, his elbows propped on the table.

Mrs. Warshaw took his empty plate. Doctor Warshaw followed her into the kitchen.

“Look here, Nellie,” he said, frowning, “who are these young hoodlums and roustabouts he speaks of? These Jimmies and Pooh-pooh Hughes-es and Trajedicks? And this stuff he reads—jugs of wine!” He blew his nose violently.

“Sh-sh!” said Mrs. Warshaw. “You don't understand, Father. He—”

“And all this smoking! He'll ruin his lungs if he don't take care.”

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“That was his first this morning,” she defended. “Don’t be so old fashioned!”

He went out, sulkily slamming the door.

In the dining room she hastened to warn Peter: “Don’t talk that way before your father,” she whispered mysteriously. “He doesn’t understand like I do. I like to hear all about your friends. You must tell me everything. But your father is getting—well, a little old,—he sits in that dirty old office by himself too much. . . . And don’t smoke before him, Peter, at least not through your nose.”

One of the first things he confided to Jimmy back in their old room on Mulberry Street was his new sophistication in regard to Maybury. From a sense of loyalty he put the truth in the plural— “They don’t want you to act like you really are down in a hick town like that, Tradinick. Ever notice? If you mention Khayyam or Kipling to ’em they think you’re throwing on the dog. By gosh, they think old Omar was some kind of a stew hound. They think the Wine in his verse is—”

Jimmy laughed uproariously, slapped Peter on the back and yelled, “Wine, wine, wine! Yea! *J’ai beaucoup de vin rouge, moi!*”

He took bottles of port and sherry and a flask of whiskey from his suitcase. He plied Peter with them and suddenly Peter felt his stomach

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burning gorgeously and the room was a haze. He leaned out of the window gazing at the lights and flashing cars.

The yelling and singing of the returned students fired him with a desire to dance a war dance, shoot off a gun, burn up Uni Hall, juggle shining, golden balls madly, standing tilted on the Observatory. He had often wondered what a fellow could do when he felt crazy, wild with excitement, bursting out of himself. It was this then—yelling insanely with Jimmy, laughing hysterically, drinking this stuff. He had been too long in Maybury, nowhere to go, nobody he could really talk to.

He beat a clashing tom-tom with two tin tobacco cans while Jimmy did an Egyptian dance clad in a sheet.

It was delicious to be back.

### VII

The excellent private stock that Jimmy Tradnick had brought back in his suitcase healed all the breaches between him and his brotherhood. He was less often in the room now and more often at the big gray fraternity house set far back in The Row, its gables and old English doors half hidden by poplars and thickets of barberry.

Peter was not lonely, however, for he was mak-

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ing new friends. He was on a sophomore committee—he was learning how to “get by”! He wanted to be marked for his “pep.” He was trying to make the enthusiasm of his return become part of him. He practiced a new bold air with self-conscious vim. . . . Although Jimmy evinced no interest in Peter’s sophomoric gambolling he must have approved it for he said one day:

“Like to come over to the house for dinner tonight, m’ boy?”

“Sure,” said Peter, cocking an alert eye at him over the top of a book.

“Check. Make it snappy.” Jimmy’s voice was casual but his grin was significant.

As they sauntered up the long cobblestone path to the really beautiful old house, the men standing about on the terrace, smoking and talking, looked at Peter with interest. He tried to walk without self-consciousness, making a great pretense of chatting gayly with Tradinick. He wished Ross Boyle would come by and see him walking on this sanctified ground. . . . He wished he had worn his brown tie instead of this thing. His collar was a trifle wide, he thought. Would that half inch of superfluous collar be counted against him? He felt very close now to the pulse of the university—this was the real thing!

And here was he, insignificant Peter Warshaw of Maybury shaking hands with Ted Ireland, the  
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editor of this year's annual! Peter tried to mention casually a conversation he had had with Pewter Hughes and he thought Jimmy's eyes twinkled understandingly.

At dinner he was pleased to be placed next to young Mr. Whitney, a member *in facultate*. . . . Oh, he was getting on, talking this way with an instructor. That was what a fraternity did for you.

He glanced about the big dining room—you went down a few steps to enter it—the floor was tiled with dull red bricks. There were logs blazing in the open grate, silver loving cups gleaming in the firelight. Waiters came and went through a swinging door. One of the waiters was Larsen, of Peter's chemistry laboratory. Peter avoided his glance. . . . The picture of himself at home, eating pancakes recurred to him. . . . His grapefruit was spiked. . . . He used his silver carefully, correctly, but noted with alarm that the others kept their napkins folded in half.

When the men sang between courses he leaned back and gazed into the fire, feeling warm, well-fed, luxurious. He realized how starved he'd been for it all. This was real—the real thing at last!

Later he hated the strain of his frequent trips with Jimmy to the A. O. G. house, and it was worse when Ted Ireland called for him in a daz-



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zling car. . . . Then one night, Ted came in unexpectedly and for a nerve-racking fifteen minutes Ted and Peter and Jimmy sat about talking of nothings. Peter knew the "bid" was to be his. When they asked him he assumed no artificial pose of not wanting it. He did want it and he was fiercely afraid they might never ask him again.

"Wh-why, yes, I think I will—would," he gulped in answer to Ted's grave question. They liked the unabashed delight that shone in his brown eyes.

They shook his hands in clasps that hurt, cursing him and laughing. They drank port and more port and Peter was the recipient of every maudlin toast. They all fell over on the bed at last, dully realizing that it had been some important occasion, they couldn't remember what. "*Portant* occasion," chortled Jimmy, "Hah! Hah! Hah!" They slept.

Peter sat up in the middle of the night. He could hear the campus chimes droning three o'clock. The light was still burning. Ted lay at the foot of the bed, his blonde hair ruffled above his pale face. Jimmy's arm was trailing on the floor. Peter arranged it quietly. . . . Then he remembered and glanced down at his lapel. There it shone, very small but significant. He took it

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out, read the letters, A. O. G., polished it with his thumb and put it back in his buttonhole.

### VIII

Simultaneously with his initiation into A. O. G., Peter was initiated into the society of women, the slipperiness of dance floors. He learned to speak with sly innuendo of a "mean woman" and a "wicked party." He and Jimmy, still rooming together, lived now at the A. O. G. house. Instead of lounging about the terrace and riding in Ted's dazzling car as Peter had pictured himself doing he was more often consigned to dismal tasks in the company of the colored porter in the dark posterior regions of the house. He went on errands for the seniors and raked the lawns. The cold glances of the upper-classmen filled him with discomfort. Ted Ireland evinced a new sternness.

"Look here," he had said bluntly after that night in the Mulberry Street room, "I ought to be shot for getting piped up with a pledge and I don't want to hear of you pulling that stuff again. Don't hang around with our friend James so goddam much either."

Peter settled into a dreary groove of menial slavery and stiffly polite meals broken up by the occasional dances he hated. He struggled to

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maintain the artificial self that had won him his jeweled pin. He thought he ought to be that Peter because it made his mother so proud. Her letters described how she told Mrs. Huff and Mrs. Gardner of his fraternity life, his rich friends, and the dances he attended in a dress suit.

He was vaguely troubled by the doubled expenses his parents were perhaps struggling to pay. But they never alluded to their difficulties.

Spring brought him new, undefined desires—he took long walks on the east campus and in the cemetery on the edge of town; but his thoughts on these walks were only dull echoes of his first reaction to college: “God, how I hate it, God!” He had spent two years in laboring toward “the real thing.” He had thought he was grasping it, but that was all illusion. He wondered if Dean Fannicott, Doctor Dyrcks, Professor Gabler, Mr. Whitney (now his rhetoric instructor), had it.

One day in the English seminar he read a play by Yeats. It seemed as if the people in it were all striving toward that real thing which he could not define. It was called in the book, absurdly, he thought, *The Land of Heart's Desire*. He read more plays, all required by his drama course under Dyrcks—a dark, lanky, awkward man who lounged upon the desk as he talked. *The Lonely*



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*Way, The Green Cockatoo*, by Schnitzler, *Monna Vanna*, by Maeterlinck, Stephen Phillips' *Paolo and Francesca*—they all perplexed and baffled him. They were about people who were different from anyone he knew. Were there people like that, then? Did Fannicott, Dyrcks, Gabler and Whitney know them?

He was drunk from reading sometimes. When he left the seminar, the late afternoon sunlight blinded him and blood-red streaks taunted his eyes. The warm spring air, the budding trees, the yellow tulips by University Hall, the sound of the band practicing, the shrill whistle of the gardeners puttering about the flower beds, all seemed strange and clothed in mysticism. He went along with his head down, not speaking to people he knew. If he had spoken he would have wanted to give voice to the queer phrases that were sluicing through his mind like trickling gold. The feverish melting pot of his brain poured forth the words he had read, in new semblances. Often there was no meaning to their shapes:

*“And jaded filth, Lebrêt . . . your dagger’s rabble . . . too oft the harlequin . . . brimstone bellowing . . . what sooth, Prospère—an endless quiet . . . may I play with your sword? . . . a dreadful shadow on the grass . . . the silver pinnacle of your naked breast—Messire, a flutter-*

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*ing of satin wings . . . imperishable beauty catches fire!"*

He remembered wanting to juggle myriads of shining balls, standing tilted on top of the Observatory. Maybe he was a little—crazy? The thought made him feel reckless.

Coming out of Sterling Hall one day, he yelled hoarsely and flung his sophomore hat up into a tree. It lodged there and he went on, glad the campus was deserted. His footsteps echoed on the walk—the raucous quarreling of bronze grackles in the pine trees, a sudden gust of organ music from the auditorium as Professor North, practicing for his recital, enthusiastically pulled out all the stops.

Peter laughed aloud, sardonically, evilly. "God, how I hate it!"

He wondered, all at once, if Whitney were there in his office up in University Hall. He took the steps two at a time, hoping somehow that Whitney could help him.

The young instructor was at a desk in the long, dim room. He smiled as Peter entered and leaned back in his chair.

"Hello, Warshaw. Bring back that theme I told you to revise?"

"No," said Peter. He sat down awkwardly in a chair by the desk and cleared his throat. "I—just dropped in to see if you were here."



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“Glad you did,” said Whitney easily.

Peter ran his hand through his tawny hair. He looked helplessly and inarticulately at Whitney. “Look here,” he blurted, “what’s the matter with me?”

“The matter with you?” Whitney considered a moment, frowned, and began glibly, “Too self-conscious for one thing, Warshaw. The beginnings of knowledge seeping into your brain are not yet coördinated. A sort of hyper-intense *awareness* of your ego is making you mentally clumsy. Your themes are dreadful! That’s because they will later be good. Your themes—”

“I don’t give a whoop in hell about themes,” said Peter rudely. “And I never will.”

Whitney raised his eyebrows and was silent. . . . The sound of the band practicing *Hail To Alma Mater* crept dismally through the open window. . . .

“You think I’m egotistical?” asked Peter in a suddenly small and humble voice.

“Very,” replied Whitney.

Peter thought.

“Listen,” he said, “where did I hear this:

Star-washed pavilions keeping faith  
With candle-blanchèd night . . .  
Here where the ashes of dead days are kept  
And crumpled griefs, faint-perfumed with your tears.

Ah, Léocadie, thy voice is wine  
That trickles—that leaps—

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He continued desperately, shamedly, his eyes on the window—

That leaps like thin amber fire.  
The flame is gone and with its splendor, doubting  
And pallid tears and nagging beauty's lure . . .  
And there's an end to questing. . . .

“That’s all,” he muttered. He felt ready to cry.

“Bravo!” said Mr. Whitney. “It’s a little too rich in imagery—your last line is abrupt. ‘It’s splendor’ is bad technically. Couldn’t you say ‘that splendor,’ avoiding the allusion of ‘s’es’?”

“It isn’t mine,” lied Peter. He rose and attempted a matter-of-fact tone. “I’ll bring that theme in tomorrow.”

“Yes, do. Come in again,” said Whitney warmly. “And your verse—bring in more of your verse.”

His verse! What if Whitney told the fellows he wrote verse? They would think him queer. They would rag him.

. . . As he went up the steps of the A. O. G. house Ted Ireland and Perce Bainum, in the porch swing, watched him critically.

“Where’s your sophomore hat?” asked Ted, eying Peter’s wind-blown hair.

“In a tree by Sterling Hall,” said Peter, colorlessly. As he entered the house he heard Perce ask Ted:

“What’s the matter with that bird?”

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“Temperamental, I guess,” Ted answered. They both laughed derisively.

### IX

After a summer spent in canvassing for the Longlast Aluminum Company, Peter decided that he was the salesman type—that he could “sell himself,” “make a good approach,” “close up.” He was through with nonsense. . . . He assured his parents that he was “going to get on top of things.”

“You’re on top right now,” said his mother proudly. “You’re in with the right sort of people down there. You’ll know how to get around in good society when you’re a wealthy business man.”

“Well, and you seem level-headed,” put in his father; “it shows good sense the way you’ve gone out and helped with expenses this summer. I believe you’re making the most of your opportunities. . . . And that’s what we want.”

Peter registered for Accountancy and Economics the first semester of his junior year. But he did not deny himself the pleasure of another course with Dyrcks, whose dark, somber smile Peter was growing to understand and like. Then he crowded in Gabler’s Russian Literature and a two-hour course in Philosophy under Doctor

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Cynara Georges. She was a woman about thirty with red-brown eyes and a mop of mahogany-colored hair. Her voice was quiet and rather deep—she watched understandingly while you recited, seemed to encourage you with her “*m-hm,*” “*m-hm!*”—then she pounced on your conclusions with feline swiftness and tore them into shreds. From her course Peter remembered longest that first premise of Descartes’, “I exist. How often? As often as I think.” (He scribbled it on his study-table calendar once but Jimmy changed “think” to “drink” and the laughter of Perce and Ted made Peter feel like an ass.)

And there was Doctor Richard O’Neill in Economics, too. Some people said he was a “Red,” a propagandist . . . One day Peter was dreaming through O’Neill’s lecture like those about him, when a different note in the instructor’s voice caught his attention. O’Neill was standing, as was his habit, on the low platform, legs wide apart, head out-thrust and tongue lolling half humorously from between his parted lips:

“I wish you would come to me open-minded, ready to abandon irrational codes for rational, willing to cast out old beliefs, old doctrines; to kick aside barriers, inhibitions; smash up codes, preconceived faiths—”

Peter had a sudden feeling of cleanness and lightness as if a rain-washed wind had whisked



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away the débris piled chaotically in his mind. His eyes met O'Neill's for a moment. . . . Nobody else had looked up. Sylvia Cole, the pretty flapper next to Peter, was conscientiously writing in her notebook:

"1. Must come,

- a. open-minded
- b. ready to abandon irr. codes for r.
- c. kick aside barriers, inhib., etc."

After the class Peter loitered beside O'Neill's desk, asking some meaningless question about the assignment.

O'Neill gave him a searching glance. He saw a tall, slim fellow with a freckled face, thin lips and crisp, vivid red hair, fingering a junior cap nervously. O'Neill smiled almost shyly at Peter as if he feared the look of liking and response would disappear. . . . "I was going to take a little walk—care to come?"

They struck across the campus toward the old cemetery. They hastened along in the crisp October weather, sniffing the aroma of the air: leaf-mold, frosty earth and sear grass.

O'Neill walked very fast, head thrust forward, eyes straight ahead, clipping at the path with his short stick. Peter wanted to run, to shout. He knew that he was trampling his resolution of the summer underfoot. He began to talk very rapidly, trying incoherently to tell O'Neill all that had



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ever happened to him, while the older man nodded "Of course!" "Of course!" . . . "To be sure!" "To be sure!"—always looking ahead and clipping the path with his cane.

" . . . it looks to me now as if I'd been wasting my time," Peter went on. "I've got to hurry. It's all so—so short."

They had reached the cemetery with its overgrown paths, crumbling stones and litter of fallen leaves. A red sun was slipping down behind the spears of distant pines. They watched the windows of the massive armory turn to golden eyes.

O'Neill gave his curious chuckle. "I was waiting for you to come to me, Warshaw. I rather thought you would. Miss Georges spoke about you to me."

Peter was pleased. She had noticed him, then? The memory of her red-brown eyes, her white hands with the squarish wrists, her resonant voice droning "m-hm," "m-hm," came to him poignantly.

### X

They talked until it was dusk.

Peter returned to his fraternity house, his head swirling as if he had been drinking wine. In his room he found Ted Ireland playing stud poker with Jimmy.

"I saw you with old Dicky O'Neill," said Ire-  
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land. "What's the old propagandist teaching you?"

"Sure, he'll hand you the gaff," said Jimmy from the bed. "He's paid for it."

Peter's face grew red, and with a sudden, wild clutch at the dramatic, he unfastened his pin and dashed it down on the table. "There, you damned four-flushers!" he said. "Take your pin. I'm through."

He stood a moment, casting about for more startling action, then started throwing books, towels, neckties into his trunk.

"Don't be pettish," implored Jimmy lightly.

"And don't fool with that pin," Ted warned him. "You might be taken seriously."

Peter went on packing. "I'm through," he repeated, parrot-like.

Ted and Jimmy left the room. Peter locked the door and continued to pack. His anger had vanished—he kept a tight clutch on his mood of recklessness lest that desert him, too.

He heard Ted and Jimmy outside the door, conferring with Perce Bainum. He caught a whisper now and then:

"That goddam sorehead is—"

"Don't fool with him. . . . a lot of stinkum . . . . bunkum . . . ."

"How does he get that way?"

"Perce, you're the head of the house. What's

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the fraternity precedent? . . . . Got to come up at business meeting.”

Peter expected to be sorry the next day—but just now he was delighted with himself. Wow! Hadn't he made a sensation?

“I didn't think I had it in me,” he muttered. He threw in many of Jimmy's ties along with his.

### XI

He went to meetings of a discussion group at Doctor Dyrcks' apartment with O'Neill. Very often he met Miss Georges there, sometimes Professor Gabler—never Dean Fannicott or Mr. Whitney. To his surprise he found that a number of the students were “young radicals”, that some of them wore Greek letter pins and were well known socially. The meetings had been going on for years. Why had he never heard of them? He discovered that he was ill-acquainted with this University of his—it was very different from his first ideas of it.

He glugged himself on talk—talk of the war, peace conferences, Russia, Communism, pragmatism, the Rochdale system of coöperation, Bertrand Russell, Shaw, Wells, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Anatole France, Henry James, the modern movement in poetry, Rupert Brooke, Masefield, Robinson, Frost, Aikens, Ezra Pound, Japanese  
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verse—what was the time-unit of vers libre?—the relation of color to music?—how to secure the third dimension in pictures? At first he read furiously to keep pace with the talkers, but he found he did not have to know what he was talking about—his ingenuous opinions given without the background of knowledge drew the most attention to himself.

He was as eager to display the real Peter now as he had been eager to construct an artificial self. He was almost affectedly natural. He ignored niceties of grooming and etiquette deliberately—he was on a debauch of abandonment now, galloping furiously about the world of ideas. He flaunted his moods before those he knew they would startle—red rags at Philistine bulls. He argued wildly in classes, wrote free verse for the college magazine (a “liberal” publication), and hectoring F. Blair Golden, editor of the student daily newspaper, with mischievous letters of opprobrium and assault.

Back in the old house on Mulberry Street he made his room as nearly like a studio as he could, with a few batik rags here and there, tall red candles, a low couch spread out like a Turkish divan, pillows of mad hue, a mangy leopard skin he had picked up at a pawn-shop. . . . An unexpected thing had happened—one morning Jimmy came back.



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“I chucked ’em, too,” he said. “Too much of a strain on me to keep respectable. What’s the good of their moilin’ and toilin’ anyhow? . . . I like your Turkish effect here.” He ensconced himself contentedly. “Have some gin?”

Jimmy was cutting most of his classes. He slept until noon, went out to eat, came back to smoke, drink and sleep some more. It was irritating when Peter brought his friends up to the room to find Jimmy stretched out at ease, ready to pounce upon the conversation and didactically pronounce all ideas, no matter what, “stinkum and bunkum”. . . . Still it angered Peter to have Doctor O’Neill ask him one day why he humored “that degenerate lout”. . . . And why did he? Jimmy was no good but he couldn’t deny his affection for him.

One night, (he had been reading *Crime and Punishment*, by Dostoevsky), sitting at the window and looking out at the blackness of the sleeping world, he saw life as a phantasmagoria of shifting forms: the grotesque and ugly, blackened dens of murky evils, opium bunks, the far cities of Shanghai and Cairo, stretches of feverish sand, pyramids, exotic purple flowers, women dancing like silver flames, stokers with gleaming, naked torsos dripping sweat, wizened men who begged with knotted, shaking hands, lousy children shrieking and groveling, babies crying with  
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twisted red faces because they were helpless and afraid, boys dreading themselves in the first clutch of passion, girls with white bodies and moist red mouths—and faces, faces, faces—yellow, white, black, prehensile, greedy, barbarous, young, convulsed, senile—dancing like leaves in the wind a moment, downflung in myriads . . . a rustle . . . they were still . . . putrescence . . . the deep, dreadfully silent snows of oblivion.

Infinity slowly unfurled itself before him, a dark and ever darkening mantle that wavered up first as a thin spiral, shook out fold after fold; deepening in blackness, in power, swifter and swifter it whirled like a maddening dervish—he was caught in the outer folds now, swept tighter and tighter into muffled impotence, swathed in it, blinded and deafened by that horrible, elusive tissue, suffocated. There was no escape. He was pinioned—borne away from his little, familiar world of cups and sheets and chairs—things you could clutch!—God! . . . there was nothing to clutch out there—even the spheres had vanished—only darkness, silence and space upon space.

He started back from the window. He wanted people, voices, laughter. . . . The room looked weird—tall-piled shadows in the corners, a stubby candle burning low. Jimmy asleep, his face wearing a ghastly pallor.

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. . . Peter stumbled over on the couch, seized Jimmy's shoulder, shook him furiously.

"Hell! What?—what is it?"

Jimmy was warm, comforting, actual. In his striped pajamas he sat up and looked around, unaware that he was personifying Matter. He did not mention the strangeness of Peter's eyes, the idiocy of his shrill, relieved laugh.

"I—I thought you were dead," he muttered.

"Gimme a cigarette," said Jimmy. "*I was* dead—dead drunk!"

"Get up," said Peter. "Let's go out to a beanery and eat. . . . I'm damned hungry."

## XII

Spring came back again and the gardeners puttered once more around beds of jonquils and tulips. The brisk gait of the campus slowed into a loiter—more vacant seats at classes, more crowded booths at You'll Come Inn; tobacco smoke, perfume and laughter; the night made staccato by serenading saxophones and the open cutouts of speeding cars.

Peter found himself fagged, impatient with wordy conversations—restless, perplexed, bad-tempered. He wondered what had come over him. Once when the "group" met at Doctor Cynara Georges', drinking tea and smoking in a  
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room lit only by the grate fire, he thought suddenly that he hated them. Dyrcks' dark, somber smile, the look in his eyes as he watched every movement of Miss Georges, disgusted Peter most of all. Or maybe it was *she* he hated, she alone, because of her resonant voice and gesturing hands that had become so poignant to him. Because she seemed so sure of herself and was kind to him.

Although he hated her he stayed after the rest had left. He was especially glad when the last, Dyrcks, had gone out of the door and the sound of his footsteps died away in the corridor. . . . Sitting in that deep chair by the fireside she looks little and very feminine. The lace about her squarish wrists is creamy and soft. Is she sure of herself, after all? She looks very tired. *Do I hate her? . . .*

He fancied himself in a strange, distant city with her—Bagdad, Canton—she would not be merely kind to him there. He would be able to make long speeches—wise speeches—

“More tea, Peter?”

“No, thanks.”

He stood tall and stiff before her, fingering a bowl on the mantelpiece.

“That is a—nice thing.”

“Yes—Majolica.”

If they were only in Bagdad—or Canton! It



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was impossible here—he was haunted by remembered quiz papers on which her red ink glistened—“Can you prove this statement?”, “You have mistaken Hume’s meaning.” Damn the University anyway! It had created this barrier. . . . Spring articulate outside—and he inside, inarticulate! She was a woman. And he was a man.

He wanted to fling himself down on his knees at her feet and bury his head in her lap. . . . He walked over to the piano and began to play Rachmaninoff’s Prelude in F, then a nocturne of Schumann’s and then *Mon cœur s’ouvre à ta voix*.

First she sat quietly in the armchair, next he heard her quick hands moving among the tea things—now she was close behind him and her fingers crept very gently through his hair. He did not dare to stop playing. He played on and on—he couldn’t stop. At last her voice—“Don’t play any more, Peter.”

His hands made a loud discord where they fell upon the keys. She had lit a cigarette and was leaning against the piano, her red-brown eyes deep and rich with thoughts he could not guess.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I’ve bored you—have I bored you?”

“No, no, Peter—hurt me, I think.”

He looked up at her dumbly with a look that he thought she surely could read. She went on swiftly, “Hurt me by your youth. Stirred up in  
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me old things I thought were put by. Remembering when I was like that—restless and haunted and wanting—God knows what! Peter, don't ever get sure of yourself—didactic like I am. It's deadly."

"I can't," he said. "I wish I could."

He turned brusquely to the piano. With certain fingers he sounded a chord, first very faintly, then more firmly and again, louder.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Léocadie," he said. "That's it—Léocadie."

"I don't understand—"

"You don't understand lots of things," he muttered. With swift decision he rose, seized his coat and hat and told her he must go. O'Neill was giving a quiz in Ec tomorrow. It had been very nice—he had enjoyed it. And good night.

Out in the street he whispered his name for her—"Léocadie! Léocadie!"—many times.

Why couldn't he go on with things—ever? Why did the actual elude him? It was like that verse of long ago—or maybe she was like the verse:

"Leaps like thin amber fire . . . the flame is gone  
And with its splendor, doubting  
And pallid tears and nagging beauty's lure—  
And there's an end to questing."

He passed the A. O. G. house on the way home. They were giving a dance—he could hear the music. He pitied himself, feeling very lonely.



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## XIII

The finals were over and he was through with being a junior. Walking across the campus for the last time that year, he looked at it all speculatively.

What had it been twenty years ago? What would it be in twenty more? Just now it was a stretch of great open spaces and noble trees. Furors of landscape gardening went on continually; workmen were always plotting new, scrolly beds like tortuous black islands and continents in a sea of green. There was no homogeneity in the buildings' architecture. The library was Gothic with red-tiled roof. Old University Hall was of no style whatever. The auditorium aspired to embody a symposium of Greek ideals. The new part of Sterling Hall was medieval English—the old part had forgotten from what period it sprung. He liked the massive, carved doors on the new museum, but the stone was ugly and the whole thing clumsy, he thought. The chemistry building was severe with a preoccupied, studious aspect; he fancied it gazing through bone-rimmed glasses at a test-tube.

Seniors were wont to tell awed parents at Commencement time that here were the largest chemistry laboratories in the world. The largest col-  
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lege band! The greatest college newspaper!  
The biggest armory!

They did not mention the richness or paucity of ideas.

He remembered his first registration, that ceaseless tread of feet passing and repassing. He had been bewildered, had wished to fling himself on this soft grass to shut that treading out. Each year, freshmen would be frightened by it. Perhaps old University Hall was frightened by those impatient feet that clamored at its corridors:

*Chaos, noise, intangible unrest! Interwoven personalities, Youth straining at the leash of law, rebellion surging against the dams of Civilization. . . . Torrents of fresh life rushing up in a new-crested wave to wear away another imperceptible layer of an institution's resisting embankment. . . .*

"Just a minute, Warshaw!" It was Doctor Richard O'Neill, hurrying after him with lean strides. "I wanted to say good-by to you, Warshaw. I'm leaving for the east. I suppose you're going home tonight?"

"This afternoon. . . . Are you giving that course in Ec Fifteen next year?"

"Oh, you didn't know then? I'm going to another college next year."

"I wish I were leaving, too."

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“No, you must stay and keep the Group stirred up. Dyrcks will be here and Miss Georges—or, rather, Mrs. Dyrcks. They’re to be married in the summer.”

“Yes—yes, I heard they were.” Peter concealed his surprise. He hadn’t heard.

For a moment he was numb, uncaring, as if she had been some alien who had no grip on his emotions. But as he walked away his sense of loss suddenly smote him. . . . Léocadie dead! The little apartment deserted—the quiet, delicious pain of watching her move about the tea things, so aloof and mysterious, would not trouble him any more. Her red-brown eyes intent on thoughts he could not share. He was shut out—a Peri beating at closed gates. . . .

“You, Léocadie, warm in Paradise,  
So sure and still; and proudly comforted—  
Will you not hear some night—with hushed surprise,  
The faint beseeching of a Peri’s cries  
And answer tremulous? Or bow your head,  
Swift-sealing memory within your eyes?”

He stopped to write it on the back of an envelope. He tried to revise the last line, forgetting for a moment the pain that had created it.

### XIV

Fireflies spun broken paths of gold through the darkness. The red and white peonies lifting  
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heavy heads beside the porch were indistinct blurs. It seemed very drowsy to Peter as he sat on the steps and smoked, gazing at the new building of the Maybury waterworks across the street. An automobile passed now and then, a child steering its wagon on the pavement, a soundless bicycle or two. From next door a phonograph playing "Avalon" over and over—the occasional shouts of boys on the lawn: "Run, sheep, run!" "King's ex!" "King's ex!" He was waiting to take his mother to choir practice.

She stepped out of the door, portly, a bit breathless, pinning on her hat.

"Mercy, it's hot! I should have watered those pinies. Aren't you going to wear a hat? Well, I presume that's a new college wrinkle."

As they walked along she fanned herself with the small pasteboard fan she held in her neatly silk-gloved hand. "Are you anxious to get back to school this time, Peter? It must seem mighty dead here after all your gadding around."

"No, Mother, honestly I like it. I haven't been stepping out much down there. I feel just as sleepy and lazy as a kid."

"You've been working too hard. You need a good rest."

"I've been thinking hard, but I haven't worked much."

He had an unconquerable urge to explain.



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“Been thinking a lot, sort of seeing what it’s all about. I feel as if I had graduated already. The degree doesn’t matter. Would you care if— if—” It was hard to broach. “—if I stopped there now—I mean, would you be disappointed? I’d like to go some place where I could find out what I want. Down there I just found out that I did want something. I’ll work, you know, make my own way—I thought some of going to England on a cattle ship. Then if I could get to Paris—”

“Peter!” She stopped fanning and put the fan into her bag with fingers that shook a little. “Not graduate? . . . I felt this was coming, Peter. I saw you were changed. Kind of an indifference—and getting sloppy again and careless acting. I’m glad you brought this up, Peter. I just wanted to tell you—you *ought* to be knowing what you want to do. You’re not a child. You know we don’t mean you to make your own way. We’re willing to send you—we’ve been willing. But we’re a little disappointed. Your father has noticed it, too. Giving up your fraternity—acting so *queer!* You’ve lost your ambitions—”

“No, Mother, no, I haven’t. If you’d just *listen.*” He struggled to be coherent, but it did sound absurd in words. And she was right; he ought to know now, ought to have some footing. But he hadn’t. Not a single definite thing. Only  
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the vague feeling that it would be a kind of spiritual redundance to go back. "Don't you see, it's a matter of *failing*. I did get a lot of things down there, but they all taught me I'd failed. And the more I got, the more I found out I was failing. Now if I can get some place where—where—"

"You mean you've failed in your studies, Peter?"

"No, no," he laughed. "Look at it this way—I haven't any background. I met people at the University: a Doctor O'Neill and a—Miss Georges—they talked to me a lot—they were wonderful to me. I guess they liked me. They made me see how futile it is. Mother, I can't be a business man or a doctor either, I'm afraid—Mother!"

"Well, we wouldn't mind if—what do you want to be, Peter?"

"I don't know," he said in a contrite voice.

"Well, maybe you'll find out if you go back."

She tried to make it sound cheerful, but he realized the fear and disappointment and bewilderment in the troubled depths of her mind.

He wondered if he could make his father understand. "I believe I'll drop into Father's office," he said at the door of the church.

She walked on in, silent, her head held very straight as if she were urging herself into an assumption of bravery and pride.

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Standing irresolutely on the bare church steps, he looked after her. The vestibule door closed. He felt sick and ashamed.

He knew, suddenly, that she would never be proud of him.

His father was sitting in the old splint-bottomed chair beside the same old three-legged table. But there was an electric light now, dangling where the kerosene lamp used to be. He looked up from a ponderous volume.

Peter leaned against a showcase, where the old dolls and jewel boxes had been replaced by brushes, corn plasters and hot water bags. "Looks great in here now, Father."

"Yes, your mother thought we were getting a mite old-fashioned in here." His father's eyes twinkled facetiously. "She got rid of my cuspidor. Reckon when you come back with your sheepskin you'll beat us all for progressiveness. We-ll, progress is all right. Now take the Old School and the New School of medicine: the Allopaths thought they had every known remedy—"

He was off. Peter listened for a moment, then his thoughts wandered. After all, it was no more tedious than Dyrcks' and Whitney's dissertations on Elizabethan drama. . . . His father was rising, replacing the book, snapping off the light. "Guess I'll be closing up now. Ready to go?"

He had not broached it yet. . . . They walked



## PETER WARSHAW

slowly along Front Street. His father briskly stroked his gray beard. They spoke to everybody they met.

“Yes, I was telling your mother,” said his father, suddenly, “not to worry if your letters sounded queer—and all these liberal friends of yours do irritate her—you’ll come out all right, Peter. Another year will fix you up in fine shape. You’re a little vague now, but that’s what education does—knocks all that vagueness out of a young chap.”

Peter opened his mouth to emit turbulent speech, but the speech didn’t come. . . . He lit a cigarette. They walked up to the brown frame house with its scrolly white porch and scrambling vines.

His father stooped stiffly, fumbled for the key under the doormat. He straightened, bewildered. “The key isn’t under the doormat,” he said in perturbed tones.

Peter, looking at the fireflies, started. “What, the key isn’t under the doormat?”

“It always is—it must be.” His father was stooping to fumble again.

“I have it. Mother gave it to me,” said Peter. He fitted the key into the lock and they went in.



# TOWN AND GOWN

## XV

On the train going back to the State University, Peter watched the brown fields and sturdy shocks of oats, straight, shiny wire fences, red barns, silos, orange-colored station houses and the placid, untinted blue sky over green meadows and muddy ponds where cows stood knee-deep in warm, stagnant water.

O'Neill would be gone. Had the Administration indicated its displeasure with him? Peter remembered the lugubrious chuckle, the lolling tongue, and envied the students that would stroll with him on some other campus. Gabler would be there, Whitney, Dyrcks—and *she* . . . he breathed a little quicker at the thought of seeing her again. They would meet alone some time and he meant to stare at her significantly, disconcertingly.

“Restless and haunted and wanting,” she had said. “Don’t ever be sure of yourself, Peter.” She had drawn her fingers tenderly through his hair. Yes, she had done that. . . .

A boy settled himself in the next seat, pulling up his trousers with self-conscious care. He sat quietly for a moment, gazing straight before him with a distraught expression. Then he pulled out a brown announcement of courses and com-

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## PETER WARSHAW

menced puzzling over "Directions to Registrants," sometimes tracing the lines with a hand that bore a highschool class ring.

Peter laughed. He could almost hear Jimmy's voice—"toilin' an' moilin'—all stinkum an' bunkum!" Well, old Jimmy would be back. Jimmy would always be back.

Peter turned to the window and watched the fat corn lands again.



*Second Episode:*

THE FACULTY AND  
THE CREAKING SHIRT

From the University Regulations:

*“Members of the faculty shall be present at all social entertainments given by or for an organization or group of students at which men and women are present.”*





## II: *The Faculty and the Creaking Shirt*

1

THE girl at the right of Dean Fannicott was explaining to the boy at her right about anachronisms: “—they are the wall-flowers at the ball of Time; misfits, errors of the age. Pewter Hughes is one—muscles and savagery and primitiveness . . . better off as a cave-dweller. I’m an anachronism. Should have liked brocades and powdered wigs—back in the time of triolets and courtesans—”

Brocades! Triolets! Courtesans!

The assistant dean of the Department of English stole a curious glance in the direction of the voice, a voice as delicate as a black and white etching on parchment. A slimly rounded shoulder was almost grazing his dinner coat. Her hand, with dangling beaded bracelets quivering from the wrist, was displaying its whiteness and bright, enameled tips by a meandering gesture. He noted the strange head-dress she wore caught

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like an exotic bird of plumage in her black hair. The cut of her golden gown at the back was—ah—slashing, he thought. She was not looking at him. Yet he told himself amusedly that her dissertation on anachronisms had been perhaps for his benefit. The round shoulder brushed nearer his own. He moved away a careful inch, remarking to Miss Griffith (on his left) that the pastel shades in the flower centerpieces were exquisite.

The assistant dean of the department of English was unaccountably discomfited. It may have been because the greatest demand he made upon his friends and, indeed, upon the world was consistency. He would rather a rogue proved a rogue once society so labeled him than for a stray whim of righteousness in the wretch's nature to assert itself and upset the filing cabinets of justice. He disliked people intensely when they exhibited streaks not in keeping with his verdicts on them. For his part he had found the world rather a neat, orderly place. He had had few quarrels with it.

There is no reason to believe that Fannicott was not descended from that Captain Fannicot, a "bold and impatient" French bourgeois, who helped in 1832 to quell the insurrection of his fellow countrymen who were absurd enough to fight for their "rights." He led his company against the rioters as a protest at their successive

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hoistings of a red flag and a black flag. It was their inconsistency that so infuriated the good bourgeois—and his uncontrollable exasperation cost him his life.

To be sure this Fannicott who now spelled his name with the additional “t” would have disapproved of his ancestor’s ill-advised conduct as a course for himself in any situation. To him, consistency meant doing the thing and to preserve one’s life is most frequently the thing. Even red and black flags when hoisted with annoying alternation called forth only his quiet, thin, mirthless smile of pitying amusement.

“Most people are such fools,” he often told young Whitney of the department. The most blatant and hopeless of all fools were the undergraduates. Fannicott (usually escorting Miss Griffith, also of the department) attended their frivolous functions with as good grace as a man of his classical degree could assume. On these evenings he felt himself to be exhibiting an indulgence and a forbearance really noteworthy. He assured himself that only Miss Griffith and the rest of his colleagues, forced as they all were into these sugar-coated perambulations called “formals”,—only these understanding members of the inner faculty circle could detect his weariness and boredom. His yawns he concealed with the utmost tact. He smiled kindly at the foolish



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quips. He made one-syllable remarks that the youngsters could be depended upon to fathom. Only to Miss Griffith did he allow himself the occasional relief of addressing a speech concerning dithyrambs and Moliere and onomatopœia.

It was reasonably discomfiting, then, to hear epigrammatic remarks embodying triolets and courtesans on the lips of a badly dressed young girl who waved her hands about as if she were enacting a photoplay. With his habitual justice the assistant dean admitted that his observation about the pastel shades of the centerpiece would have been more appropriate on her lips, while her own elliptical pronouncements on anachronisms might really have amused Miss Griffith's scholarly mind had he, himself, chosen to utter them.

. . . He finished a breast of roast duckling in silence. The greatest virtue of undergraduate affairs, he often remarked, was the excellence of their cuisines. The dinners were really perfect. Lacking conversation they served good food.

He noticed that the little basket of nuts at his service was empty. He proffered it to Miss Griffith. "You might take it home to your sister's little girl. Several of them would form a charming tea set."

Before the young woman on his right turned about he had felt himself to be kindly and thoughtful. He did not like children. To have

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remembered Miss Griffith's small niece (long-legged, snuffly child!) was an act of noteworthy benevolence. Yet the moment this befeathered girl flashed him a glance he felt puerile and idiotic.

"Oh, do let me give it my basket, too," said the high voice. "How old is it?"

He felt she said "it" malevolently. With what dispatch she spread the news of his absurd charity and collected many of the crêpe trifles! In some curious fashion she gave the impression that "it" was a charge of his, making him seem, he thought, sentimental, fond, doddering.

She passed him the silly baskets with a sweeping, gracious gesture. She smiled brilliantly.

"Do tell me about 'it'," she encouraged.

He smiled frostily and ate his salad.

Her eyes seemed poised for a moment like glittering, unsteady birds arrested in flight. He looked up at them once and averted his gaze. He felt chilled, inimical, disturbed. He knew that his cold silence snubbed her. He was dogged yet alarmed. He bolstered himself by thinking stubbornly, "She meant to make a fool of me". It was characteristic of Fannicott that he didn't think she had. Still he knew she thought she had. That error was almost as bad.

He gave his undivided attention to Miss Griffith. He found himself studying her in a de-

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tached, critical fashion; her somewhat prominent eyes set far apart, her hair bound in flat plaits under a rather obvious net about her well-shaped head, her generous mouth curving slowly into a thoughtful smile, the chiffon she kept drawing modestly about her shoulders—although her gown had small puffed sleeves—her large, capable hands moving calmly here and there. He felt remote from her, noting all these details as he never had before. All the while he was dimly aware of an exotic scent teasing his nostrils. “An immorally intriguing fragrance,” he commented grimly to himself. To himself? No—aloud.

For—“They arrest people for seeing, eating, doing, drinking, talking,” said the girl on his right, leaning earnestly toward him, “why not for smelling things? Why have free smell? It might mean treason. This perfume—sort of trail-y and incense-y and, as you say, immoral,—well, don’t you think of a great Japanese god you’d like to worship and of sandalwood and teakwood and faint li’l pinky blossoms and great gold lanterns? That’s a kind of treason to your respectability, isn’t it now? Oh, and geisha girls, and sad-eyed Orientals swaying back and forth while they sing lyrics from Sosano-Ono-Mikoto.

“Do you like Japanese poetry?” she inquired breathlessly.



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He had a manner of expressing indifference by keeping his eyes straight ahead in a rude, unresponsive immobility. He used this manner now for he knew it would aggrieve her if her gestures and restless glances were unobserved.

“Do you like the metre *uta?*” she asked, gently. “You know it consists of thirty-one syllables, sometimes thirty-two, arranged as a distich, but written in five lines containing 5, 7, 5, 7, 7 syllables respectively.”

Still he did not look at her. The heavy fragrance made him feel slightly dizzy. She leaned closer. Her shoulder was really brushing his dinner coat. He reminded himself to make sure afterward that there was no trace of powder left on his sleeve. Her eyes were like strange, restless, green birds, he thought fantastically. Their flutterings would mock him if he dared glance up. He was nervous, unstrung. Something alien in her, some inconsistency, antagonized him. He wished the dinner would terminate at once. He had an extraordinary desire to push back his chair and leave the room. He sat quite still contemplating such a step and the peculiar insanity of it, and he looked very steadily and quite unsmilingly at his water glass.

“Do you like this?” she said, and her voice was so low it seemed necessary for her to lean still nearer—



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Why has the harsh wind  
Carried away the blossoms  
With his savage breath

And left untouched, uninjured,  
The leaves of the worn out tree?

She chanted the mournful syllables in slow, droning monotone—gray her voice was now, as before it had been etched in black and white; and there was a hush of spring in it and the dull lullaby of bees and the smooth waving of silver-green prairie grass rippling into a path for the invisible feet of the west wind . . . gray . . . gray!

She was only a child, he thought. A swift pity surged up through him and stung his lids. All her trappings, the barbarous head-dress, the daring golden gown, the dangling beads, were toys to her just as words were her toys. She handled the glistening phrases as she wore the ornaments without guessing their value or their danger—or their danger to others, he appended with a wry, inward smile. As he thought these things he was silent. His hand was moving his glass aimlessly. He tipped it and looked at the water. Shoved it an inch to the right. A bit to the left.

For a moment or two she waited expectantly. Only he did not realize she had been waiting until she said:

“I feel like hurrying away as the mouse did  
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after Alice spoke of Dinah. I have a—characteristic—similar to the mouse’s chief—uh—characteristic.” Her voice seemed suspended in air. At last he looked up cautiously. He saw only the waving tip of the iridescent feathers sweeping the curve of that cool and slimly rounded shoulder. She had turned to say some very confidential nothings to her dinner partner.

She did not turn back. At first he had an undefined hope, then a sense of abandonment. He faced Miss Griffith resentfully as if the disappointment of this dénouement were her fault.

She was perplexed when he asked abruptly, “By the way—apropos of really nothing—what was the chief characteristic of the Mouse?”

“*The Mouse?*” said Miss Griffith.

Fannicott thought her extremely stupid. He smiled to conceal his irritation.

“The Mouse . . . the Mouse! Alice, you know. Alice in Wond——”

“Ah, yes,” said Miss Griffith. “The Mouse.”

Something had happened to his nerves. He thought if she said “mouse” again he would surely leave the table. Behind the mask of his cold smile he watched her assume her best judicial classroom expression. Never impulsive, she made it a point to deliberate a decent length of time after a question. Before, this trait had indicated to Fannicott poise and depth and

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thoughtfulness. It struck him now as being merely exasperating.

“I believe,” said Miss Griffith firmly, at last, “that the outstanding quality of the Mouse in question was sensitiveness.”

“Hah!” Fannicott’s one syllable was cryptic and a bit savage.

### II

A bulbous shield with fraternity emblems spelled out in colored electric lights hung above the fireplace. The chaperons had been placed in the easiest chairs the club offered, frankly with the design of keeping them away from the dusky living rooms where the dancing went on. The dancing (aside from the deafening, syncopated accompaniment) was a solemn and silent business. It was unbelievably important to the undergraduates. They did not talk while they pat-patted through intricate slidings and dodgings. They did not seem to breathe. Their toes and heels did ridiculous and highly improbable things in time to rhythms that could not possibly exist. Their concentration was, withal, admirable. With a high disregard for appearing absurd a young lady let herself be clutched by the nape of the neck or the shoulder or the backbone—sometimes the grasp was so circumlocutory as to include both of her arms! She usually rested her chin emphatically



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against the man's lapel or, if he were short, she clamped it on the edge of his shoulder. She maintained a solemn expression with a trace of be-dazed hypnotism in it. The man exhibited a frozen smile and rolled his eyes frequently toward the flickering Japanese lanterns.

A few couples sizzled up and down as if they were popcorn; others dashed to the side with confusing little rushes, stopping as if stunned, and vacillated for long, painstaking moments; still others loped in measured, sneaking strides about the room as if they were stalking some elusive prey.

One-steps and fox-trots seemed rather vaguely but unmistakably to be connected with the chortling of the saxophone and the dinning of the banjo—rather often a note of harmony might be detected and very often a metronomic time but the dancers might have been deaf—they went on in their own ways never bothering to change their set modes of sizzling, vacillating or loping.

. . . Or perhaps he was harsh? Perhaps Fannicott mused upon these phenomena too unkindly as he sat by the fireplace where he had been relegated by the deferential president of the fraternity house. And after all, he told himself with tardy, acidulent justice, he had not been exactly relegated. He could have danced with Miss Griffith. He could give her his arm now and lead her



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in there and they could—but what could they do? Certainly not sizzle, vacillate or lope. Inexplicably, he had to-night a rebellious distaste for doing a discreet step-slide-together with Miss Griffith held off at a decorous six-inch length.

How would it seem, he wondered, to grab a girl—that girl with the iridescent head-dress and the daring gown—grab her determinedly and jauntily as he had seen sleek-haired youths do it and flaunt a new step, a swift, absurd, dizzy step without rhythm or reason and hold her authoritatively and unrelentingly throughout the whole mad gyration that was jazz——?

He reflected drearily that he was being very dull. Miss Griffith had fallen into a reverie. Prof. Gabler and Dean Agnes Watson were struggling to keep up an anemic conversation with two freshmen whose turn it was to “entertain” the faculty during the dance.

In the frequent pauses one could almost hear the undergraduates desperately shuffling the messy leaves of their thoughts to find neat, respectable pages worthy of their elders.

“It will be nice when the music hall is done, won’t it, Dean Fannicott?” appealed the pink and white little girl.

“Oh, very nice,” said he, avoiding the understanding eyes of Miss Griffith.

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“Yes, it’ll be great when it’s done,” echoed the shiny-haired freshman.

“I dare say, I dare say,” murmured old Gabler.

“I am sure,” said Dean Watson, “that we shall all be very happy to have it ready for use.”

*That* was finished.

“Did you—did you—any of you happen to hear Dr. Hutton’s lecture at th’ auditorium Friday?” The shiny freshman made his overture, moistening his lips after every two words.

Fannicott wished that he would not moisten his lips. Annoying and nerve-racking habit! . . . With the tail of his eye he saw a golden gown silhouetted against masculine black in the doorway. . . . The freshman was looking at him anxiously. He looked past the freshman into the fireplace. He was sulking—he wished to sulk! Why should he grin like an ape and make pleasant remarks about Hutton? *He* didn’t give a damn about Hutton!

Dean Agnes Watson emerged from a yawn to defend the helpless freshman from the vast silence he had pulled down about his head.

“Ah, it was very enjoyable,” she assured him mechanically, “very enjoyable indeed!”

The assistant dean felt himself lapsing into a nervous state that was deplorable. *She* was standing there in the doorway with that ass of a

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football player—that Pewter Hughes. She was no doubt thinking what a wretched time he, Fannicott, was having. She was glad he was miserable. Was it any of her business? Had she a right to stand there and gloat over him? . . . He wondered what might happen if he threw the largest loving cup on the mantel at Prof. Gabler? . . . He supposed she was whispering now to this fool “Pewter”,—this atavistic savage, all “muscles and primitiveness”—“Oh, what a rotten time the *shaps* are having!” Then she would go away and let herself be folded up in the compact grip of her caveman and begin loping again, sinuously and assiduously, in there where all was candlelight and joyous absurdity—and—romance.

But the circle about the fireplace was startled to be interrupted by a shimmering figure in gold. The iridescent feathers were waving audaciously. She dragged the grinning Pewter’s bulky and resisting form into the group by the coatsleeve and pointed to him dramatically.

“*His shirt creaks!*” she cried.

Her voice was jerked by laughter struggling at some half-controlling leash.

Prof. Gabler and Dean Fannicott and the freshman leaped to their feet. There was a moment of electric silence. Fannicott’s first reaction was one of vicarious shame. He wanted to take her aside and say:



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“But you can’t make remarks like that, you know. It isn’t—the thing.”

Then he was aware of Miss Griffith fidgeting at his side, of the slow movement of deprecation she was making with her head, of her slow voice murmuring, “Well—re-ailly——”

Because of Miss Griffith’s displeasure, Fannicott was glad when old Gabler laughed. The freshman followed the professor’s example with the promptness of an adjacent nine-pin. Miss Watson smiled, politely vague.

Joyously now and without restraint, the girl was laughing, too. Her chin was thrust up and out as if she were standing on a high stage looking down at an audience she meant to conquer. Her breath came quickly—she was an actress playing out an emotional scene—all her muscles seemed tensed for some dramatic purpose. Her laughter was mesmeric. Potent.

“Listen,” she said, and she drew the yielding Hughes into an intricate dance step. There was a faint squeaking like the sighing of the wind in a broken poplar branch. The girl became suddenly tragic. “What shall I do?” she begged. “I can’t dance with a man whose shirt creaks! Can I?”

Curiously, her farce began to carry conviction. By the necromancy of her rapid change from mirth to despair she made her dilemma real.



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Miss Watson was suggesting a remedy. Old Gabler put out a tentative finger and touched the creaking shirt cautiously.

“I can hear it above the jazz,” mourned the girl. “I can’t keep step!”

Then Miss Griffith yielded and laughed.

Fannicott, alone, stood tightlipped and unresponsive, evincing an exaggerated interest in the loving cup he had previously considered as a missile. But he couldn’t pretend to himself that she hadn’t won her audience. . . . The efficacy of joy—she’d proved that. He felt weak and wrung dry of all mirth. She sapped it out of him with the squeezing, greedy fingers of youth.

The baffled, surrendering look in the eyes of that big, hulking chap with the phlegmatic shoulders, towering above her slim, frail, hectic vivacity flung Fannicott into unbearable restlessness. He could not stay there.

“Shall we dance?” he said to Miss Griffith, offering his arm.

As they passed through the doorway he felt the girl looking up. He would not glance at her. He knew he was depriving her of the final capitulation she wilfully sought—his. He had no triumph in the knowledge, only pain.

. . . Miss Griffith and Mr. Fannicott danced. They danced with an unusually emphatic sobriety. In contrast to the other dancers (youth and girl  
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clamped together so frankly) they appeared detached from each other—ludicrous and persistent enemies of coöperative grace.

Fannicott knew it. He told himself that he did not care. He pumped her arm up and down in a manner he perceived was obsolete. He told himself that he would pump it up and down if he chose. . . . A loping couple stared at them. . . . In and out of the confetti-hued scattering of dancers a bit of gold was threading now. She was still with Pewter Hughes. She had forgotten the creaking shirt. . . . She passed intimately close to Fannicott, the iridescent feathers swooping coolly near his cheek—the scent of her! It was very disturbing . . . she was languid, unsmiling. Her eyes were half-closed but they were fastened upon him, he thought. He shut his teeth hard and continued to labor through the side steps he knew looked antiquated, and to pump Miss Griffith's limp arm up and down.



*Third Episode:*

**THE FUSSER**

From the University Regulations:

*“Wherever women students reside they are expected to conform to the general regulations governing visitors’ hours, social engagements and the like.” . . .*





### III: *The Fusser*

#### I

**A**DMITTEDLY the champion fusser of a State University that made all of its activities competitive and insisted upon championships in everything, Andy Protheroe waited in a leather armchair in the huge parlor of the Y. W. C. A. dormitory. In a bedroom on the third floor exactly like all the other bedrooms on the second, third and fourth floors, Sylvia Cole was adding the final dab of face powder. It was the occasion of their date.

The date was in a larger sense Sylvia Cole's tryout. As a freshman handicapped by coming from the obscurity of an unknown downstate village, she had so far been ignored by the best fusers and during her five months at the State University had never had a date with a "good man."

This date would determine whether or not she was a "good woman." If she was, potentially at least,—Andy Protheroe considered it as he mused over the imitation logs in the fireplace—if she was potentially a good woman, then would he, cham-

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pion of fussers, see to it that she got on. He would introduce her to Dot Ambrose or Caris Dudley or other good women, would suggest her for sorority membership, would, in brief, pluck her from her present social mediocrity and place her in the university spotlight as "that cute little freshman Andy Protheroe dug up." For it was just such foresight that had made Andy Protheroe the champion fusser of the State University.

Sylvia Cole was cute and Andy believed that he had been the first officially to recognize that fact. He had described her just the day before to Perce Bainum in the A. O. G. house:

"God, man, you ought to see her eyes—have sort of a look in them as if they'd never seen anything but trees. I'll swear she doesn't use rouge. In strong with the dean of women and all that sort of rot. Bashful as the devil, wonderful complexion, kind of a cute, turned-up nose, slim figure but good legs. . . and those great big blue eyes; they're what take you. Kind of a kiddish girl, too."

From the standpoint of Sylvia Cole the date must have meant a rather nervous plunge into the unknown. What did he expect of her? What was she to expect of him? She had heard of Andy Protheroe. Who hadn't?

All of her previous dates at the State University had been with unknowns, non-fraternity men,  
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whom she had met at the twice-monthly "mixer" parties in the basement of the First Presbyterian church.

These dates had sometimes resolved themselves into red-sweatered, Saturday afternoon hikes into the country, after which the party returned at dusk, the sexes awkwardly separating on the wide steps to the dormitory, after dividing the armloads of red and gold autumn leaves, with a quick, "My, hasn't it all been jolly?" Or the three times that young Atkins, a sophomore who worked at the Y. M. C. A., had called for her at the dormitory, had escorted her to church via street car, had stopped in the large, well-lit parlor for a few moments after returning and had appended to his good-night, "Thank you, it certainly has been a wonderful evening, Miss Cole." Or the afternoons between classes during the warm fall days when Aubrey Fremont, white-trousered and with a silk handkerchief tied about his hair, had taken her to play tennis, returning to stand upon the steps of the dormitory for a brisk moment and leaving her with a wave of his racket and a "Thanks so much. You certainly play a great little game, Miss Cole."

These were the only kind of dates she had known at the State University. But the other kind? She was fascinated and afraid: afraid of the shadows and the whispers and the low-slung



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cars, of sleek, haughty youths with tiny moustaches who expected you to kiss them, of languid, sophisticated girls like Dot Ambrose who kissed coldly and technically—of petting. She had been too fascinated to refuse when the mighty Andy Protheroe had called her on the telephone a week after he had met her at a freshman party supervised by upper classmen and asked her for “a little date at the Orph.” She was too afraid not to regret her acceptance.

The date meant even more than Andy Protheroe and Sylvia Cole and the State University. It meant the clash of two social systems.

The social system which Andy Protheroe represented was rooted in his last year before entering high school, the year that he was fourteen. He had walked home from the party with Mildred, who was also fourteen. They had sought shelter from the stars on the bench under the watertank. A foot of bench between them, they had sat silent, alone, afraid; for they had heard their elders talk and they knew what was expected of them. Suddenly, awkwardly, he put his arm around her nervous shoulders. It was done!

Two years later, when Andy was a sophomore in high school and sixteen, he could “love ’em up” without fear or hesitation. He was described by the high school girls as “cute” and deplored by their mothers as “horrid.” Under the trees at  
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## THE FUSSER

dusk he sought his feminine prey and found them strolling arm-in-arm. In the pool hall he boasted of his adventures.

At the State University as a freshman Andy developed a new "line". He learned to use the term "pet" instead of "lovin' up" and to "fuss" instead of "stall". By the time he was a junior he was recognized as the best cheer leader and the best fusser the campus boasted. When his low-slung racer stood in front of a sorority house that house was honored.

And, like all champions, Andy had his ethics. No one deplored more than he the occasional whispered tales of the disgrace of some University girl; no one more than he spoke with virtuous anger of the suspected man. He had often told his fraternity brothers that kissing was as far as he would go with any girl; that is, a university girl. He was respectable. Some day, after he'd got out and mixed and had a good time, he would settle down and marry and father children.

Sylvia Cole's mother, back in the small town, would have called Andy Protheroe "horrid" if she had known him. She read the women's magazines and believed in making the home so cheerful that her daughter wouldn't want to be away evenings. She carefully supervised the parties to which Sylvia went and taught the girl that there was something wrong with any man who

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didn't love children and dogs. Sylvia was allowed to receive "nice boys" at home, her mother smilingly leading the family out into the dining room and returning later during the evening with refreshments. There were two kinds of boys—those who were "nice" and those who weren't.

Sylvia knew that Andy Protheroe wasn't "nice." She had accepted his proffered date because she had been flattered by attention from one so great and because she was not just sure how to refuse gracefully. And she did want to be able to announce it to some of the other girls of the dormitory.

She was nineteen and pretty.

### II

She had dressed carefully. She had on the chemise that Aunt Ida had sent for Christmas, her black canton crepe and her fur coat. As she added the last touch of powder to her forehead she had a final wave of dread pass over her that made her wish that she could find some excuse to call it all off, or that she could talk to a Patsy Perdue who was (miraculously) as kindly as she was sophisticated.

But as she looked into the mirror—the turban effect was becoming to her—the fascination got the better of fear in her warring emotions.



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She did look well. And. . . the prestige of a date with Andy Protheroe in the low-slung racer . . . she just a freshman, too. . . a sorority, maybe? She did not want to offend him—if she could only be circumspect and at the same time tactful and pretty. . . to know just what to do!

She came down the last flight of the broad, red-carpeted stairs. Andy Protheroe rose to greet her; tiny moustache, shell-rimmed spectacles, tight-fitting gray coat, silk gloves.

“Greetings and all that old rot.”

“Good evening,” she answered.

Her reply seemed in the next second stupid and provincial compared with his cynically interested look, his properly bored air, his ease and nonchalance, his atmosphere of that strange, fearful world of parchment-shaded lamps and shadows and whispers. All at once the new chemise and the canton crepe and the fur coat seemed infinitely less attractive.

And here she was stupidly silent after her stupid greeting!

“Always poor stuff to ring in the weather in the first five minutes,” he was saying as he took her arm, “but the gods are sure with us this evening. Oh. . . pardon! Here, let me pick it up. *Il n’y a pas de quoi*. Wonder how the French get that way?”

She was bewildered and feared that she



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showed it. She smiled and said quickly, as he opened the door, "My! I had the hardest quiz in chem to-day. Do you like chemistry?"

Andy Protheroe slowly disengaged his hand from her arm and drew himself up with mock solemnity. He stared at her with such a feigned expression of horror that she dropped her eyes.

"What! Mentioning studies already? I can plainly see that I'm not getting over at all. Not at *all*."

Now what should she answer? She was glad that they were out of the door where the darkness concealed her confusion.

The long, low-slung automobile was, as Andy described it, "snuggly." She found the lazy, luxurious slope of the cushioned seat foreign to her tennis-hardened muscles and was glad at the roar of the exhaust and the first lurch of the car. She somehow wanted motion and the fanning of her cheeks by rushing night air.

"All set?" He leaned toward her with sudden solicitude.

"Yes . . . thank you. What kind—that is, what make of an automobile is this?"

"Aha! I deduce, Watson, that the young lady may get out and walk if she finds out that we don't pack a mean Rolls Royce. Is that the premise?"

"Oh, no! I—" Sylvia followed his conversa-

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tion with difficulty. The mock solemnity of his eyes so close to her, misled her. "Why——"

"Oh, you mean thing!" He threw hands up and simulated a mincing, feminine attitude. "Why, I shall slap you on the wrist, so there!"

Sylvia laughed. She did not know exactly what else to do.

She was glad when they pulled up at the curb in front of the theatre.

She was proud, too, as he helped her to descend with solicitude that was almost tender. The entrance of the theater was blazing with lights and he did look like the pictures in the automobile advertisements in his suavity as he took her arm. It thrilled her to be seen by the group of nine or ten youths in front of the lobby entrance, all of whom seemed to be loungingly slender as they raised their hats in salutation. There were other couples waiting to buy tickets; their clothes, their speech, everything about them proclaimed them as different from the students she had known. There was a new lift to her chin now.

"Hello, Andy, how come?"

"Hello, there, Protheroe."

"Ay, Andy!"

Everybody knew him, admired him. And she was with him! They had never looked at her that way before when she had been with Aubrey Fremont or young Atkins.

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Some tall, flashing girl in the furriest of fur coats had stopped him.

“Say, Andy Protheroe, been hearing lots of things about you lately.”

“Well, can you feature that?”

They were in the center of a little group now, and he was introducing her to all of them, to all of these hitherto unknown gods and goddesses who wore the little, jeweled pins and spoke so easily that jargon of the other world.

The audience was composed almost entirely of students. It was the first time that Sylvia had been with a man to either of the two vaudeville theaters which shared with dances the majority of the student dates.

Andy flourished as he stood aside to allow her to pass to the further of the two seats. They were surrounded by chatting and gum-chewing couples. It was brave, gay.

The house was darkened and the show began with a reel of news motion pictures: the funeral procession of the American diplomat who had died in Italy; the cabinet official smilingly shaking hands with the champion pugilist; the name “America” spelled out in human letters by sailors at drill on the decks of the battleship; the Parisian actress pulling up her skirt to show her jewelled knee-watch (ostentatious gasps from here and there in the darkness); the wreckage of colliding

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trains near Scottsbluff, Nebraska; the grand parade of the lodge convention in Spokane; the steeple-jack gilding the knob on an Atlanta flag-pole; the uncanny hand drawing upon the screen a popular newspaper cartoon strip, the dénouement of which was the flattening out of one of the characters with a sledgehammer wielded by the other.

The vaudeville portion of the show began with the "Lorene Sisters" somersaulting on a slack wire before a blasé audience.

The next act was a dialogue between "Hal Crothers" and "Jane Bonnard," the former being represented as highly intoxicated and the latter as an indignantly pretty young lady attired in a night-gown and chiding him from the vantage point of her bedroom window.

She: How dare you! Say, my husband had a terrible experience while in Chicago last week.

He: What was that?

She: Why, he went up to his room in the hotel and what do you think?

He: Yes, yes, go on—hic!—go on!

She: He found a very lovely young woman asleep in his bed.

He: Terrible! And what did he do?

She: Why, it was terribly inconveniencing. Poor man, he had to go down in the lobby and sit



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up in an armchair all night. Now what would you have done in such a case?

He: I'd have done the same thing as your husband did, but I wouldn't have lied about it!

The act ended in a dance and after the dance he pulled a tassel at the bottom of her night robe, the front panel of which ascended like a curtain to reveal zebra-striped black and orange hose.

Next came a one-act musical comedy, the theme of which was the love of twelve girl models for the French proprietor of a dress-making establishment on Broadway. It ended with the reappearance of each girl attired in the colors of some nation, singing the national air. The last and prettiest came out in a red, white and blue flag; the orchestra played *The Star Spangled Banner* while the audience struggled indifferently to arise. Tremendous applause from the gallery.

The three DeJongue Sisters followed, skipping here and there in time to their xylophones. This act ended with the playing on bottles of *Home Sweet Home* in jazz syncopation.

The Egyptian Dancers, ostensibly bare from the waist up, except for brass plates over their breasts, wriggled toward the front of the stage in accompaniment to sensual music and drums. The darkened house responded now with facetious male comment: "Hot dog!" . . . "Oh, Boy!" . . . "Sweet Papa!"

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A one-act play: The capitulation of the Wall Street husband to the vampire (in the tight black and red gown conventional with "vampires") and the triumph of the plump, blonde wife who wins him back by arousing his jealousy. At the end of the skit it developed that she had been flirting with her brother—the husband was mollified, the black and red fiend chastened, the brother welcomed and the blonde happy. The play ended with a song and dance by the pacific four.

Sylvia Cole enjoyed it all. The laughter of the other couples about her seemed to sanction the dialogue; besides, she had been with her mother to the same sort of things on visits to the city. She might have slapped any youth who would have had the temerity to have addressed similar remarks to her, but they seemed only mildly shocking and not out of place in a vaudeville show.

Andy, the sophisticated, began putting on his gloves at the beginning of the last act—"Brown and McCabe's Performing Cats." Sylvia followed his cue. The girls about her were donning their furs, too.

From the theater they went to the You'll Come Inn, a basement establishment with wooden tables, latticed booths and parchment-shaded lamps. Most of the other couples were going there from the theater. Sylvia had never been in the place before. She ate ice cream every day

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but usually at the confectionery stores near the campus.

“Foul ball joint,” Andy said apologetically as he held her chair with deference. “There isn’t a real cabaret in the town.”

Sylvia agreed with him but she was really thrilled by the place—the dim lights, the other couples in the booths turning off the table lamps when the proprietor wasn’t watching; the jazz music and the entertainer in evening suit singing. Andy Protheroe was humming the chorus with him.

Ma! He’s making eyes at me!

As he sat across the table from her—tiny moustache, shell-rimmed spectacles, extreme cravat, cigarette—he reminded Sylvia of the “society” pictures she had seen in the rotogravure section of the Sunday newspapers. She was glad now that she had gone out with him, except——

What would be next? What would he expect of her? Her nervousness, almost forgotten during the show, returned with these self-asked questions. She dropped her eyes when he looked at her. Several remarks that she had planned while in the theatre completely escaped her and she was rendered more impotent by her own silence.

“You’re pretty.” He leaned forward until his face was close to hers.



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“Am I? Oh, no!”

Under the pink-shaded lamp, her lips were sensitive, unguarded. She toyed with her glass.

The waiter came with the fifty cent check. Andy paid it and left a quarter on top of his carefully crushed napkin as a tip.

“All set?”

“Yes.”

### III

The touch of his fingers was lingering as he helped her into the car. They started. The sudden contact of their shoulders as the car lurched made Sylvia almost shrink. In another moment they were off Court Street and into one of the darkly lit residence streets where there were three or four large wooden houses to the block, most of them already darkened for the night.

“Not afraid of me, Mouse?” Andy’s face was only a few inches from hers.

“No.” She forced herself to look up at him.

“Why!” His arm was slipping unobtrusively about her shoulder. “Mademoiselle couldn’t be afraid of the timid Andy Protheroe——” His arm was about her now and his talk was more forced and rapid, as if he were afraid she would notice. “Why, I’m the most bashful man in University. Ask anybody.”

They drove along in silence for a moment. Her



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throat felt nerveless and dry as the tips of his fingers patted her neck gently. His arm was tighter about her now. She saw that they were near her dormitory. Half a block away under the dark outline of a tree which leaned silently over the pavement, he stopped the car. His words were tense in spite of their attempted facetiousness.

“Say, you’ve showed me a good time to-night. I like you, Mouse—and you know that Andy Protheroe bears a reputation for veracity that has never been assailed——” His face was but a few inches from hers now and she could feel his quick breath. “Just one, Mouse—honestly, I couldn’t help that. It’s your fault, Mouse, for being so pretty.”

He had kissed her before he spoke. She sat silent, her gloved hands in her lap, unmoving. Her eyes were expressionless in the dimness and were fixed on the darkness of the skyline. Her lips seemed paralyzed, oblivious. She wanted to respond with ease or sophistication or anger or pleasure—anything. But she seemed incapable of *any* response.

He had moved closer now and had his other arm about her. His words were suave and fast and meaningless but she did not seem to hear him. It all seemed to her like some sort of a strange farce with herself as an onlooker, unable to pre-

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vent anything said or done by the actors. He was kissing her again—twice.

She was not afraid—or was she? It was merely that she did not know what to do, what was expected of her! yes, that was it. For a moment she wanted to please him. But what? How?

“Kiss me, Mouse. Be a cute, funny rabbit. You are one, you know. . . . Afraid?”

He had removed one arm from about her shoulder and had taken her hand. “What’s the matter, Mouse? You’re all right. Look at me once, won’t you?”

He had gently twisted her head about until his face was but a few inches away. He kissed her again. Her lips were still. Her eyes looked into his blankly. Her hand lay tense and motionless in his.

For a moment neither of them moved. Then Andy Protheroe, his arms suddenly panic-stricken, disengaged himself.

“For the love of John!” he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper. “What’s the matter?”

He helped her alight from the car and without a word they walked the half block to the dormitory and went up the broad stone steps. He was saying something as the door opened but it was all vague to her. Once it flashed through her numb mind that she had been stupid and that he would never ask her for a date again.



*Fourth Episode:*

GIRLS WHO PET

From the History of the University:

*“On Feb. 9, 18—, the Trustees voted to admit women students. Since that time they have constituted from one-sixth to one-fifth of the total number of students.”*





## IV: *Girls Who Pet*

### I

THE four of them were silent, each outline in the darkness of the fraternity's piazza only quickened as with staccato accent by the repeated glow of his cigarette.

Across the street, the Pi Omegas were giving a dance. The breathless, book-laden creatures who had fled down the street this morning in pursuit of eight o'clocks, had been transformed by the unmagical necromancy of cosmetics, silks, and lantern-glow. Green and mauve and rose and gold moths, they fluttered now behind half-drawn shades about the music as though it were an irresistible candle.

The three glowing cigarettes and the one cigar on the fraternity piazza watched meditatively.

The music stopped and the shadows across the street burst as if with sparks into a clapping of hands and little shrieks and laughter. Two by two, always two by two, there were forms who passed now under the Chinese lanterns out into the blackness of the lawn. One pair came fur-

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tively across the pavement and stopped in front of the unlighted fraternity piazza. A moment they stood silently apart, then her whiteness merged into his blackness. A long tense silence and a quick laugh. They separated and went back across the street where they soon gleamed cream and black under the Pi Omega lanterns.

“Most all of 'em pet, I guess.”

“All the pretty ones.”

“Some do one night and don't the next—god-dam funny!”

The three opinions came from the cigarettes. It was the turn of the cigar. Behind the cigar was Andy Protheroe—twenty-four and a senior. At last he leaned over the rail and spat. He spoke as one tacitly acknowledged the best fusser on the campus.

“*All* of 'em pet. Good women. Poor women. *All* of 'em.”

Glowing expectantly, the three cigarettes waited.

“If a girl doesn't pet, a man can figure he didn't rush 'er right . . . Even a flapper likes romance. A man makes a mistake to depend on his line and overlook the moon.”

From the cigarettes, applauding laughter.

“Use your line for the first deal—sure. The wit scintillates, the mean phrase grabs attention. It's a game—sure—but you've got to make *her*  
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forget that. The professional flapper c'n stack the cards while you cut the deck." The cigar went out while Andy puffed enthralling rings of rhetoric. "She reneges 'nd you call 'er—you might as well quit. She stops playin' because you watched the rules too close. . . . No, forget the game yourself. Don't be afraid to let that 'aching, unguarded note' slip into your voice. You both know you're both pretending—sure. College is a hard, sordid, practical kind of place 'nd petting is its substitute for romance."

He struck a match. The sudden flare illuminated a lazily handsome face with coy moustache and striking eyes. "Say I'm taking geology with Caris Dudley. Everybody knows 'er. Is she a first-night petter?"

Was she? . . . Nobody knew.

## II

It was later known that the night Caris Dudley was supposed to lead the spring prom with Pewter Hughes she had a date with Andy Protheroe, and the way of it was this:

Caris Dudley had been "playing" with Pewter Hughes since the night she wore her gold dress at a formal dinner and chanced to be seated next to him.

Hughes was a foot-ball hero, named on two all-



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star elevens and the prototype of huge blue prints displayed in all tobacco shops and university supply stores. Prexy would have been alarmed to receive one half the applause that Pewter Hughes was accorded at mass meetings. Pewter hated mass meetings but he liked the applause and he boggled through innumerable halting "pep-raisers", his face red and his hands desperately concealed in his pockets, perceiving that no matter what he said or how he said it he was accorded unmitigated enthusiasm.

He was very big, very clumsy, slow of motion and of speech. Wearing his halo slightly aslant, with awkwardness and good nature, he neither courted nor deprecated adulation. He was too lazy to collect the clippings about himself in the city papers. If his mother saw his pictures in the Sunday supplements she had to buy them herself. He was easily frightened by instructors and when they spoke to him about his appalling cuts and shockingly illiterate papers, he was humble and ashamed. And pitying his ineptitude, they lost their irritation at the assumption of the Administration that leniency would be shown to Mr. Hughes during the fall season at least.

Caris Dudley had been first attracted by the halo of Pewter Hughes. The night she wore her golden gown and triumphantly beheld his easy capitulation she told herself that having devoted

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so much time recently to the study of Japanese verse she deserved the rather vacuous amusement of flirting with a gridiron god. Later she found that bigness without brains appealed to her vastly. Although in his absence she patronized his memory, in his presence she found it difficult to achieve superciliousness. His very obtuseness defeated her. He made it plain that he prized her the less because she was admittedly intelligent. Pewter had his own ideas about women.

She read him a poem once and he looked vague and indulgent. After she had finished he told her how he was going to broil beefsteak on a red-hot stone at his fraternity picnic.

“But wasn’t it nice?”

“What—nice?”

“My villanelle.”

“Your—which?”

“My villanelle.”

“I want to kiss it.”

“Don’t be silly—an awfully crude joke, too, Pewter.”

“Don’t you like me to be crude?”

“No.”

“Want me to be like that little guy you step out with—what’s his name?—that little bit of a guy that writes all the bull for the magazine? I can’t understand it. I hope you can.”

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“You can’t because you’re a dumb-bell, Pewter.”

“I’m a dumb-bell, am I? So you really think I’m a dumb-bell. I’d better not come any more. You’re nutty about these highbrows, Dud.”

“Don’t be nasty. Kiss me and stop talking. You really oughtn’t talk, you know.”

Somewhat pacified—he did not trouble to understand innuendo—“Do you love me?”

“Of course I love you. And you love beefsteak, so we’re perfectly happy.”

“Damn right I love beefsteak. . . . Comfy?”

“Mm—hm.”

Thus Pewter in his most abominable vein. If Caris Dudley mused upon such conversations afterward she thought of them with disgust, but she usually remembered other things when he was gone. Of how he had seemed like a little boy when she stroked his hair—how tightly he had held her—how he trembled—how they had stood in the dark hall watching the spring rain—the lights of cars splashing undulating pools of gold on the wet pavement—she had pretended to be afraid of lightning and he snuggled her inside his great, rough coat, calling her a funny baby kitten.

She wished she knew what his reactions were at times like these. Or had he reactions? She kept hoping his silences held mysterious, un-



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dreamed-of depths, yet she knew such hopes were the stuff of illusion. She was accustomed now to hiding her dreams from men, or if she flung out strange fancies recklessly she was inured to the crassness of the affectionate replies:

“—such a queer little sweetie, aren't you, Dud? Clever little girl! Can't say *I* ever thought those buildings were like 'humped camels.' How do you think up such funny things, eh?”

She supposed there were men, instructors or post graduates, maybe, who responded delightfully to the poetic mood but she was afraid of their learning which seemed so often to engender in them the smile cynical or condescending. And there was a self she had which Pewter Hughes and his type came nearer to pleasing—a self which clamored for lights and color and jazz music, a syncopated self with overtones of madness.

She believed in rouge and her powder-box; in the wisdom of Prexy and the Grand Council of her sorority; in the State University's football team and in the integrity of all deans but the Dean of Women; she believed that most girls were cats and that all men wanted to kiss her; she loved some of her relatives and would have sworn that her brothers were virtuous; she believed newspapers to be ethical, socialists altruistic, writers temperamental and hoboes, train-



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robbers and gypsies to be romantic. Most of all she believed in her own immediate success after graduation.

Over her study table she had pinned Dowson's verses:

They are not long, the weeping and the laughter,  
Love and desire and hate,  
I think they have no portion in us after  
We pass the gate.

She maintained that she would never marry; but if a man was handsome enough she wondered during his introduction if she hadn't better marry him. Pewter Hughes, not being sufficiently handsome, called many times before she began to wonder. At last she considered the inevitable question (she was amused to think how horrified Pewter Hughes would be at the word "marriage," but numerous conquests had made her vain of her power) and her consideration was fraught with conditionings for herself and apologies for Pewter.

"If I had my career made I could afford to marry a man like that. . . . He's so big I'd be proud of him. What if he doesn't understand—anything?—his voice is terribly tender when he calls me 'baby kitten'—his hair feels like silky plush at the back—dances smoothly for such a big chap . . . can imagine us at a smart soirée: 'Look charming together, don't they?' 'She just

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comes up to his lapels! . . . can imagine us at dinner in our little apartment—he'd look dear serving—a room of my own where I could write and he couldn't come. . . . him pounding at the door: 'Sweetheart, aren't you through? I want to kiss you!'" She carried marital scenes no further than kissing or perhaps the scared thought of undressing the first night. The text of her sophistication contained many ellipses.

As her imagination progressed she became more sensitive to Pewter's moods. She detected a recurrent moroseness in him. . . . "His eyelashes are so light, too! Could I marry a man like that?"

One of his absences was longer than all the rest. She actually worried about the prom. "And my new black gown! I wish I hadn't bought that red feather fan—could he be boorish enough to——?"

"Funny. I never had a man act this way before. Too much petting, maybe? But I've tried not letting him—and that time I had to call him up. . . . I look absolutely vampish in that black dress. After the prom he'll be different."

He did not come until the night before the dance.

"Oh, you bad boy! What do you mean by treating your kitten so badly?" She hadn't meant to accuse him, but it was all she could think of to say.

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She tried not to look reproachful. "Is it cold enough for an overcoat? Oh, it's raining. You're all wet. Put your things by the radiator." The little silence while he emerged bulkily from the big rough coat she loved quivered like a taut nerve.

They faced each other in the living room which her family had hastily abandoned (she lived at home). She was angry to find herself a bit breathless and awkward. "Sit over here and dry off," she said sulkily and after poking the grate fire, sat across the room from him.

In the firelight his face had a heavy, swollen appearance. He looked at her absently and without the proper penitence, she thought. "Had three quizzes; been working like the devil; flunking everything," he said, as if it bored him to explain. He seemed to feel that this final delinquency really deserved a few words of apology.

She saw no reason to believe his excuse.

"That isn't it," she said, angry-eyed, "but it doesn't matter."

"What do you mean—'that isn't it?'"

"I said it didn't matter."

"What do you mean 'it don't matter?'"

She was silent.

He sat for a long time looking into the fire. Then he looked at her. He made the only overture he knew how to make: walked over to her



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and drew her up, peremptorily into arms that allowed no refusal. She pushed at his shoulders futilely, whispering the accusations she had thought out before he came. He did not hear them. He was kissing her. She had not meant to let him kiss her. . . . His mouth held hers for long moments. The trembling of his body sent little torrents of weakness through her. She yielded to the moment, eyes closed, thoughts wheeling like gnats in meaningless flight. One thought whirled past her many times—"What am I? What am I? What am I?"

After it was over she said, "Don't." For answer he drew her back again, more fiercely than before. He was no longer a senior, a refractory boy, a football player, a hulk or a dumb-bell.

"What do you want, Pewter? What do you—expect? Why do you act so funny—lately? Can't you tell me, Pewter?"

"I don't know. Do I act funny? Guess I'm sort of crazy. . . . Caris, can I carry you over to the couch like we do sometimes—like you were a little bit of a girl?"

She felt slim and helpless as he took her in his big arms and placed her carefully, tenderly, down in the dim corner of the couch. She lay there silent as he crowded up beside her until his cheek was against her arm. He was possessed now by a surprising coolness and a brutal honesty.



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She listened to what he told her with a detachment that was poised and mature. She understood all that he said—she understood more than he said.

“So you went to those places when—when you didn’t come here?”

“Yes, you don’t know how it is, Dud. You don’t know how a man feels.”

“Well, I think maybe I do.” She spoke slowly and was careful not to move lest she startle him out of his mood of confession. . . . She had wanted the truth and now she had it. “And you felt the same way with me as with those—women?”

“Yes. I did. I do. But I’m all right now—I don’t feel that way now.” He spoke cheerfully, hopefully.

She felt a curious need of hiding everything she thought from him and so she answered gently, “I’m glad”; and suggested as gently that he had better go—she had a headache.

. . . Under the street lamp she watched him striding away with his peculiar *bumbling* walk—she used to love the clumsy bigness of those strides. And when he came out on the football field, a blanketed giant! And everybody around on the bleachers pointing her out as the girl Pewter Hughes was rushing. One after another she let the little pangs of remembrance prick her be-

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fore she went back to face the ugly part. . . . It was right here in the hall they had stood when it rained—it was raining now. She thought the reflected street lights were drowned, golden goblets . . . they shimmered murkily in pools of black, spilled wine . . . Pewter wouldn't have known what she meant.

She felt infinitely older. . . . He had thought she wouldn't understand. But she had realized that men were like that—it pleased her to be tolerant, to believe that she understood "how a man feels." He could have told no other girl. She had aroused a new, beautiful quality of honesty in him. . . . Didn't she even feel a guilty little thrill at his hinted adventures over in the dark, mysterious quarter of the town? . . . Still she felt degraded. She did not realize how much until the tears started suddenly to run, hot and unchecked, down her cheeks. She stood in the doorway and looked with blurred eyes at blurred lights and blurred pavements. Her thoughts were blurred, too. Why was she unhappy? Was it because Pewter had looked so virtuous and smug when he said, "I'm all right now. I don't feel that way now?" Or because of the spring rain and the sadness of its murky pools? Or because she was through with petting forever and forever and forever?

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## III

It was a weary and monotonous voice that answered Pewter's telephone call the next evening. "The prom. No, I'm not going to the prom. . . . Oh, no, Pewter, I'm really not going. Please don't argue. . . . And don't tell me I have to because I don't have to. . . . No, I don't give a damn about the looks of it."

Her "damn", she thought, was the only thing that rescued the conversation from being disgustingly sophomoric. Because her mother began a long and tiresome lecture on swearing, Caris went out upon the porch. She sat in the porch swing. . . . She wished she hadn't bought the expensive scarlet feather fan. . . . It was Spring. Drops of stars seeping out on the pale sky like delicate bubbles. The too-sweet smell of the lilac hedge. Not dark yet. A banjo playing.

*"They are not long, the weeping and the laughter——"*

When the taxis started going by to the prom she would go inside.

Andy Protheroe, passing briskly, began to saunter when he saw Caris Dudley on the porch. Of course, it seemed almost mysterious for her to be sitting there when she was supposed to lead the grand march with Pewter Hughes at nine o'clock.



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She did not move from her hunched posture as he came up the walk, but she allowed her eyes to smile at him. As he crossed the porch he said:

“Greetings, old thing, and all that rot! How are you this evening?”

“Low.”

“So low you’d have to stand on a box to whisper to a duck! I can perceive the lowness in Mademoiselle’s dreamy eyes. Why has the pretty maid descended to this deplorable depression?” He spoke fluently and with the grandness of many-syllabled words as became a cheer-leader, amateur actor and dramatic critic. A man, in fact, who was known as a card. (Pewter could not have fathomed one-half of Protheroe’s vocabulary. She felt an unreasoning nostalgia for Pewter’s dull speech.)

“With my usual meticulous deduction I surmise that Miss Caris Dudley will not trip the light fantastic *ce soir?*”

“No, she will not, Andy.” (Why did he use the third person? Why did he pull that bromide about the light fantastic? Why did he insert his rotten French?)

“Permit me to exhibit Protheroe’s famous brand of unerring tact and refrain from asking questions. Questions are the most dangerous form of rhetoric. They should be seen, not heard. Answered but never asked.”



## TOWN AND GOWN

“That means you want me to answer?”

“No, I should much prefer to talk about the moon. Look!”

He pointed to a great, crimson, Chinese moon that glided out with Oriental grace from behind a screen of pine trees.

Caris looked up at it with sick eyes. She wanted something—she didn't know what. Pewter was a dumb-bell. Andy was a slicker. Neither of them should talk. The snugly intimate room of silence closed them round. She let herself—forced herself to forget his facetious voice, his unfortunate cleverness.

What was he saying? She faced him curiously. His handsome eyes were reaching for hers. Wearily, she watched his hand steal toward her own, hesitate with wise uncertainty, pretend something or other, then take up her listless finger-tips . . . now her whole hand.

“Caris——” his voice was muffled and low . . . so much better that way. He did not continue—then he did know the value of silence?

She looked up at the moon again and wondered if somewhere—inside of her somewhere, maybe—she were haggard and old and gnarled and bent and brown.

He was whispering the name again and in his whisper there was something that made it sound strangely fresh and young—“Caris . . . Caris?”

## GIRLS WHO PET

He made it all appear new again . . . cautiously silent, almost imperceptibly sliding toward her . . . his fingers just touching the profile of her cheek . . . his fingers—tenderly—lingeringly—tracing the outlines of her lips.

He—who was he? She had nearly forgotten. She liked the faintly acrid smell of cigar smoke, the familiar feel of rough cloth, the insistence of the arm—something male and strong and eventual.

She closed her eyes suddenly and with tired precision let her head droop into the little hollow she knew would be between his shoulder and his coat lapel.



*Fifth Episode:*

YELLOW

From the description of University Activities: "*The University authorities encourage sports on the athletic field in such amount and of such character as is compatible with the higher objects of the University.*"





## V: *Yellow*

### I

**A**MONG tins of cosmetics on the littered dresser the tiny and beribboned alarm clock of imitation ivory (a *souvenir d'amour* cherished in pride of conquest) tinkled more and more haltingly until it finally ran down. Its ornate and inefficient hands indicated the half after six. But its clamor had been futile; for Pewter Hughes was already awake and had been for more than an hour.

Rolled up within the covers like a huge worm he lay silent, his blinking eyes vaguely on the open window. Pewter Hughes was thinking.

Sounds of Saturday morning drifted up from the street. Here the dismal "woomp-ah" of a bass horn—some proud bandsman getting ready for his part in the march across the field, of the pennanted, khaki-clad musicians. Three cars, one after another, hummed past—alumni or parents arriving early. That sound—so distant that it must have come from the uptown district—a hawker selling souvenirs, buttons and horns.

## TOWN AND GOWN

Each noise was slowly translated in the bulky mind of Pewter Hughes, his beefy brow wrinkling in accompaniment. It was the day of the game and Pewter Hughes was the best halfback the State University had ever cheered.

The statistics could be had in any cigar store in eleven states of the Cornbelt:

“Pewter Hughes? Trim ’em alone. Betcha. Weighs two hundred ten and can step a hundred in ten one, at that. When he smashes into ’em—Gawd!—oh, man! Sure, been picked on two all American elevens. He’s a heller an’ no mistake.”

Pewter Hughes at 6.30 on the morning of the big game was not unaware of these facts. He had seen a picture of himself in the Sunday supplements of every newspaper in the middle west. He had seen six thousand fellow students at a pep meeting rise in one worshipful mass and yell hoarse adoration at him. He had received the handshake and congratulations of the unapproachable Prexy. He had been fêted, flattered, pointed out—why, even the highbrows had written poems comparing him to Greek gods and such stuff.

But there was the rub. Pewter Hughes was too well aware.

He could not cast from his mind the picture of a fat, prize-winning steer he had once seen. What had they fed, brushed, admired and exhibited this steer for? Umph, Pewter Hughes  
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## YELLOW

knew now! His little eyes blinked in impotent anger as he thought of the stands in the new stadium.

“Thirty thousand of ’em an’ not a one of ’em ever take any more exercise than climbin’ on a street car. An’ them yellin’ me on and a-cussin’ me if I don’t win for ’em! Why don’t they get out an’ try it once—they’d see what it was.”

He and twenty-one other fools like him—trained, trained, trained—beaten out of all the good things of life . . . women, beer, beefsteak. The sissies!

How every one in the University had guarded him—instructors, girls, fraternity brothers, everybody. Guarded him, why? Damn ’em, why did they guard that fat steer? Pewter Hughes’ eyes blinked fast—yes, why did they guard that steer?

He felt a sudden resentment toward Coach Shifty Miles and the rest of the team. Why couldn’t some of them help him shoulder that fearful, haunting responsibility of satisfying the crowds all over the country who would wait that afternoon at bulletin boards and newspaper offices and telegraph stations—greedy for winning—nothing but winning would satisfy them.

“Why d’I hafta be the whole damn team?”

Pewter Hughes’ thick lower lip, slightly scarred in one corner where the foot of an oppos-



## TOWN AND GOWN

ing tackle had once struck him squarely in the mouth, twitched in huge self-pity as he thought of his freshman days in the State University. How he used to think football was a game where you had lots of fun. Game—*hell!*

Yes, he had started out well in the University. Studied hard . . . going to be an accountant or something. Those jobs paid big and people looked up to you there. Then they got hold of him and put him on the freshman football team. Made him stand up against the regulars “to develop nerve”. Yeh, kicked him around like he was a dirty dog. Like to killed him sometimes.

He recalled how he had first broken into the game as a regular during his sophomore year. How he “knocked ’em dead” as a junior. This year—captain.

And what had become of his studies in the College of Commerce? During the football season they had been easy on him whether he studied or not; then the other students had helped him crib in quizzes, helped him by writing out his lessons bodily for him, helped him so thoroughly that he hadn’t learned a thing—“Not a cussed thing!”

Yes, they’d ruined him—ruined him—just so he could win for them during that sixty minutes this afternoon. Darn little they cared. All he could do now after he graduated was get a job coaching some one-horse college team; and then

## YELLOW

some year the team would lose a game or two and he'd be out looking for another job. That was the way it went. You had to win—win—win! Why couldn't they have let him alone?

Pewter Hughes felt a weakness in his stomach amounting almost to nausea—nothing like his usual morning hunger—as he finally threw his heavy limbs over the edge of the bed and began to dress. Even his resentment vanished. He wished vaguely that he could hurry unnoticed from the pavement and the crowds and the game to some cool, moist, dark spot out in silent woods where he could bury himself and hide—yes, hide!

### II

The way in which Coach Shifty Miles called Pewter Hughes to one side after breakfast was a masterpiece of tact—quiet, easy, unobtrusive. “Sure looking fit this morning, Pewt, old man.”

Pewter Hughes was silent and sullenly lowered his eyes.

“Yep,” the coach continued, “you’re going to play the game of your life today. Knock ’em dead. Eh?”

“Sure.”

But there was neither sureness nor hope nor peace in the monosyllable. Pewter Hughes knew it. He knew that the coach, who was paid a sal-

## TOWN AND GOWN

ary twice that of any professor for knowing such things, also knew it. The athletic mentor tried a different tack, lowering his voice confidentially.

“Pewt, you’re just a little bit stale. And there’s only one person on God’s green earth who can help you out of it. That’s yourself. Just forget your nerves—nobody would believe you had any, anyhow, Pewt. Do something—anything you want to—to get over this strain.”

Pewter Hughes looked up suddenly. The coach was a small man. For one moment he felt a quick, terrible impulse to crush him between his huge hands, to hurl him to the cement floor, where he would lie still and bloody, and to tell him all the things he had been thinking that morning. But the coach looked at him long and steadily and Pewter Hughes felt a return of the weak, sickly feeling.

His face at once became the unguarded face of a small boy. His red, pale-fringed eyelids blinked. He stuttered.

“Honest to God, Coach, I got to get away from here somewhere. Let me be alone. Take a walk—maybe. Get away from thinking about this game. You know it ain’t because I’m afraid of getting hurt. I’m just goddam scared stiff I might not be good.”

Coach Shifty Miles, himself an all-star quarter-

## YELLOW

back during his college days, smiled with apparent ease and indulgence.

“Why, there isn’t anything the matter with you, Pewt. You’re just too anxious to win. Sure, suppose you forget all about football this morning. Go out with Protheroe for a little spin in the country. Do what you please—long as you take care of yourself—and report back to me at twelve.”

. . . Andy Protheroe, considered by many the most skillful fusser of the State University, was known also as the best cheer leader that had ever incited hoarse crowds. Facing the stands with a megaphone almost the size of himself, his jigs, handsprings and imitations were, so the student daily newspaper had once said, “productive of great pep”.

Beside Pewter Hughes in the roadster, Protheroe looked unusually slender, dapper, well-groomed. The football star was sullen and moody. He wore an old gymnasium sweater and a cap.

The conversation opened with sparkling alacrity. Andy Protheroe was “in good” with Coach Miles and he had been given his instructions.

“Wow! Oh, man! See that woman? Don’t tell me these suburbs don’t put out some good women. Pewter, we’re overlooking some good bets out here.”



## TOWN AND GOWN

“Huh!” Pewter Hughes grunted wearily. They were turning to one side of the narrow, suburban street while four or five mud-splashed automobiles, en caravan, passed. All of the automobiles were gayly decorated with pennants upon which the name of the State University was inscribed across a football. One of the occupants of the last car recognized Pewter Hughes and waved.

“Great little car, that last one,” Protheroe commented, uneasily. “Sure the berries for eating up the old dirt, *n'est-ce pas?*”

“Huh.” Pewter Hughes had always thought that Protheroe was a highbrow. He hated him more than ever this morning.

They had passed the last straggling, red-shingled bungalow of the last suburb now, a crowd of boys in the yard stopping their football game to yell at them. The road was hard and white and there was heady wine in the November air. In the pale sunlight, the woods, gorgeous in hues of death, loomed high on each side. Across the hazy sky a flock of geese made south in a wavering wedge. A startled rabbit ran across the road and disappeared in a flash of white.

Andy Protheroe tried it again. “Isn't this mean football weather?”

Pewter Hughes looked at him in heavy and obvious disgust and turned his little eyes to a

## YELLOW

sulky contemplation of the trees that passed on either side like grim, silent runners.

“Like a little speed, Pewter? Sure.”

The ribboned miles flashed by smoothly, patches of woods racing with fields of dying brown. The motor was rhythmic.

“Isn’t this great?”

“Huh.”

They were entering a village. One-story buildings alternated with vacant lots, giving the appearance of senile, decaying teeth. In front of the drug store, men in shirt-sleeves were putting up a football score board.

“Got to hand it to some of these jay towns, Pewter. They’re not going to lose out on anything.”

Pewter Hughes straightened himself from his humped position in the seat. His voice was dull and even. “Shut your damn mouth!” he said. “Turn around.”

Neither of them said a word during the ride back to the campus. Coach Miles was there to greet them as the car pulled up at the gymnasium. After Protheroe drove away, the other two went into the coach’s office.

The diminutive coach drew up a chair and sat facing Pewter. He stared searchingly.

“Still in the dumps?”

“Yes.”

## TOWN AND GOWN

There was a long silence. The coach leaned forward until his face was only a few inches from Pewter's. "I'll tell you what's the matter with you, you big slop: you're *yellow*. Just as sure as God made little green apples. Now aren't you?"

Pewter Hughes' little eyes blinked fast in a sudden burst of futile anger. He rose from his chair and half crouched, then sank back and buried his face in his hands. For a moment he rocked his great head back and forth.

"Damn you," he said thickly, "don't you think I'm trying? I'll play. . . . sure I'll play. I'm not afraid of getting hurt. But I can't seem to get to feeling right."

### III

Pewter Hughes lay on the table—naked. The rubber was slapping at his huge slabs of moist, hairy flesh. The team was getting ready. All about him was tensivity—quick, nervous movements—eyes tightly closed—muttered words—rubbing of flesh on naked flesh—the hot, steamy smell of sweat.

Coach Miles was saying something to them all. It was the "pep talk" he always gave before the game: ". . . play 'er for all you've got in you. . . . We've got to win—*got to*. Any man on this team that quits for a second ought to be shot. . . . The game—"

## YELLOW

Pewter Hughes was just getting off the rubbing table. There was a quick explosion inside of him. He stood still for a second, his naked legs trembling, his nostrils opening and closing fast. The coach had stopped talking. They were watching with wide, startled eyes. From Pewter Hughes' open lips came a queer, shrill, inarticulate sound.

His brain went white-hot. He wanted to kill somebody. Or was it—?

“The game—” The coach's last words stung him again and again—“the game”—

That was it: the game. He wanted to kill everybody in the game—the coach, the crowd, his team, the other team. *He wanted to kill the game itself.*

If only he could get it between his hands!

He got into his uniform . . . out on the field . . . he did not know how . . . thirty thousand of them in the stands facing him as he tore off his blanket . . . they were on their feet . . . yelling.

“Who?”

“Hughes!”

“Who?”

“Hughes!”

“Who?”

“HUGHES! HUGHES! HUGHES!”

Pewter Hughes turned toward the thirty thousand of them with little eyes that burned in impotent rage.





*Sixth Episode:*

DRY AS DUST

From the University Announcement of  
Courses: "*Russian Literature,*  
*Monday, Wednesday, Friday —*  
*Prof. Gabler. Open to Juniors*  
*only; Prerequisite, one year of*  
*French and English 7.*"



## VI: *Dry as Dust*

### I

OLD Gabler lived his life at the State University in the ever-dashed and ever-renewed hope that one of the thirty or forty juniors who took his course in Russian Literature each semester would learn to read. One of them had four years ago; but none before or since.

Up in his room, a marvelous room in which towering shelves of books rose to the ceiling on every side but the one in which the table and bed were located, he quietly gloated in anticipation of the moment that would bring to him that student. Some tall, awkward girl, maybe, whose pale eyes would burn at the message of the page and who would grope for more.

Then would old Gabler, very quietly and unobtrusively—so quietly and unobtrusively lest he rudely quench the flame with too much fuel—blow upon that spark.

Let's see. There would be first (after the Russians, of course) Stendahl. Ah, *The Red and*



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*The Black!* And then, yes, some verse: Baudelaire, Villon, Blake. Then Gautier and Balzac and Flaubert and . . . and these were just a start. Just a start.

That student of four years ago! Old Gabler would rub his pudgy hands almost sensually at the mere thought of the progress made by Arnot—no, not Arnot; it was Zeitland, to be sure. Turge-  
nev's *Sportsman's Sketches* had first won him over, quite by surprise. And then how Zeitland had taken to Dostoevsky! Dostoevsky was still almost his favorite. Then Checkov. Zeitland sent back letters now and had ever since his graduation.

Old Gabler hardly dared admit his hope even to himself. But he believed that he had another prospect easily as promising as Zeitland had at first been; the most definite prospect of three semesters in the person of that tall, thin, homely Miss—yes, Miss Schultz. The one that always came in early and sat each day in the same corner seat. It was just the other morning that she had stopped at his desk on the way out and talked to him about Pushkin. She had asked where she could obtain more of Pushkin's things. Think of it! Asking for reading outside the classroom, extra reading!

The rest of the students of his class were—er, quite likable young people, to be certain—but

## DRY AS DUST

utterly hopeless from old Gabler's point of view. Their work in the course consisted in the reading each week of one Russian novel, play, book of short stories or poems, and the reporting upon it to him verbally or in a quiz. Old Gabler knew their answers by heart. These answers varied so little from year to year:

Checkov was good but his stories ended in such queer places.

Dostoevsky was good but he was so morbid.

Turgenev was good but there was so little that happened in his novels.

Andreyev was good but he did write about such horrible subjects.

Tolstoi was good but, really, wasn't *Anna Karenina* too long for such a small amount of plot and action?

From the point of view of his students Professor Gabler must have seemed a queer, pompous, didactic sort of old man. His stiff, upstanding gray hair; his protruding, beetle eyes of brown; his pink, wrinkled forehead; his timid smile and the absent way in which he rattled the keys in his pocket—he was so patently out of place anywhere except in that marvelous room in which the towering shelves of books reached to the ceiling on every side but one.

Those who took his course advised other juniors that it was soft but dry as dust. "All you got

## TOWN AND GOWN

to do is read a book every week but they sure are dry books. Anyhow, you can skip lots of it because he's pretty easy on you in the quizzes. Old Gabler's not such a bad sort, at that."

### II

To old Gabler, as he hurried across the campus that morning with an armful of books, the day must have seemed epochal. To the thirty-four students in his classroom on the third floor of University Hall, it was merely one of the mornings upon which the professor might by good luck be late enough to allow the class to escape him. Three watches were already out, for it was a written or unwritten rule at the State University that the class was privileged to leave in a body if the instructor were ten or more minutes late.

But at eight and one-half minutes after the bell, with seven watches now in sight, old Gabler opened the door to be greeted by a salvo of mock applause. His beetle eyes opened even wider and he smiled his nervous smile. He seemed so defenseless in comparison to such instructors as Dean Fannicott that he had been the object each year of mock applause, epidemics of forced coughing, shuffling of feet and the like. One could go "quite a ways" with him.

## DRY AS DUST

His gait never seemed quite sure of its destination and it was nervously mechanical as he went from the door to his desk at the front of the room. He placed his shapeless felt hat on a pile of books that littered the desk and rummaged with quick, birdlike motions in one of the crammed drawers. He finally produced a handful of cards and began calling the roll.

“Abbott.”

“Here.”

“Miss Blumenthal.”

“Here.”

“Miss Emory.”

“Here.”

“Grafton.”

“Here—ah!”

The last “here” with astounding emphasis. A few titters audible, chiefly at the almost childish surprise in old Gabler’s protruding eyes, just as if the incident were not a daily occurrence.

“Miss Homan.”

“Here.” Very languidly.

And so on down the list. Nonchalantly the thirty-four answered their thrice-weekly roll call without once suspecting what an anxious day it was for old Gabler. The youths in narrow collars and tiny neckties, the youths with hair brushed straight back from the neatest of parts, the girls in unbuckled galoshes and fur choker



## TOWN AND GOWN

collars—the thirty-four of them seated in front of old Gabler in the rows of scratched, iron-armed chairs.

The recitation began. A youth with bored, sarcastic eyes took a final gulping look at his notes, shoved the text book to one side somewhat ostentatiously and reported his reading of a volume of Checkov's short stories. There was no doubt but that he had read them. He made that point obvious by carefully outlining the plots in advance.

They were, he would say as his criticism of them, very good. Yes, very well done. Checkov was often called one of the greatest masters of the technique of the short story. But it seemed to him that at least one or two of them might have been a little bit better if there had been—well, more to them. That is, one or two of them, anyway, that he had particularly in mind in reference to this point. Now in that story, *Grisha*, as an example, the end came so suddenly and unexpectedly as to leave kind of a vague impression in the reader's mind. The names in all these stories were a little queer, of course, being Russian, and that made it a little difficult to follow them. But the stories were, as a whole, he would say, extremely good.

The class appeared to be fully as bored as the speaker. Some of them were following with their  
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## DRY AS DUST

pens the grooves in the iron arms of the desks. Two or three others who were to report that day were reading their notes as if they were attempting to learn them. Old Gabler's round, bright eyes studied the brown-tinted picture of the Parthenon which stood out on the otherwise bare and calcimined walls of the room.

Once he darted a quick, apologetic glance at the corner of the room where Irene Schultz sat. He turned his eyes away immediately and looked about as if in scrutiny at several of the other students. Irene Schultz's pale features, thin neck and light blue eyes were bent toward the papers on the arm of her desk. She was leaning slightly upon one elbow, her shoulders a bit stooped.

"And—er—now—" Old Gabler's voice was a bass drone that belied his quick eyes. "—Miss McFarland on—" He stopped to refer to the page on his desk. "—on Gorky's *Creatures That Once Were Men.*"

Miss McFarland's over-rouged cheeks "fought" slightly with her silk blouse of light green. She rose with a languidness hardly concealed and directed her voice at old Gabler rather than at the class. The students about her went back to their reading of notes and following grooves in the arms of their desks soon after she had begun reciting.

Maxim Gorky was the author of the book she

## TOWN AND GOWN

had read. He was one of the younger authors of Russia. He had come from a very poor family and had had a very hard time to make a living when he was a boy. He knew the poor classes of Russia so well. That was why he wrote of them in this book and in other books he wrote. The book described a kind of a poor hotel in Russia and showed the evils of liquor among the poor classes in Russia. The book showed that the living conditions among the poor classes of Russia were very hard. The book was somewhat complicated in some places but it gave one a very good picture of how the poor people lived there.

Miss McFarland sat down abruptly and watched anxiously as old Gabler made mysterious marks on one of the cards on his desk.

Irene Schultz was next. She was getting her notes together even before Miss McFarland had quit reciting. She was unbelievably tall as she stood up at the calling of her name. Her left hand kept opening and closing upon the arm of the desk beside her as she began her recitation.

Old Gabler was sitting straight in his swivel chair. His eyes were upon his desk. He had taken up his pencil and was drawing little triangles upon his class record. Inside these triangles he drew inverted triangles of a like size until a row of six-pointed stars had been formed across the top of the page. In another moment he

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## DRY AS DUST

had the stars colored black. It was only the matter of a few more moments until the stars were transformed into circles.

“. . . but the plot of the novel is very simple.” Her slightly jerky voice seemed to be flowing toward him like a thin trickle of water. “It shows the effects of Nihilism on a young Russian scientist, and there is also a love element in the story that . . .”

There was no longer any room at the top of the page for circles. Old Gabler began at the bottom of the page, drawing squares this time. These squares were quickly transformed into eight-pointed stars by the transposition on them of other squares of the same size. Then he surrounded each square with a large triangle.

Irene Schultz's words came quicker now and with an intonation as if she were about to reach the end of her recitation.

“I think that it is a very good novel. Turgenev has shown very subtly the effects upon two young university students of ingratitude toward their parents. That, I believe, is the lesson that Turgenev has tried to teach us in the novel. He has brought out that which he wanted to show very clearly by contrasting the one student, who is extremely neglectful of his parents, with the other student who afterward learned to understand more of what his parents meant to him . . .”



## TOWN AND GOWN

Was it because she was so unusual in appearance? Old Gabler wondered. Or was it her talk with him at the desk one time that had led him to hope she would be another Zeitland?

Just as Irene Schultz closed her recitation and sat down, the bell rang for the end of the class period. The students rose precipitately and made their way out. Old Gabler nodded to Irene Schultz as she passed. She stopped.

“Do you like Turgenev, Miss Schultz?”

“Oh,—yes, sir. I enjoyed this book a great deal.”

Old Gabler’s eyes were more round and bright than usual. His smile was anxious and defenseless.

“I’ve wanted to tell you so many times, Professor Gabler, how much I enjoy this course.” She was awkwardly, almost pathetically poised in front of his desk. “I like reading very much and the Russian writers are so unusual, don’t you think? At first I couldn’t understand them. They seemed so queer and their stories didn’t even seem to have a plot to them. But I think it was I who was at fault, Professor Gabler, for not really grasping the lessons they were trying to teach. I do believe that I did get the lesson Turgenev was trying to teach in *Fathers and Sons*.”

## DRY AS DUST

“Russian literature,” said old Gabler slowly, dully, “is very interesting.”

Miss Schultz smiled almost gratefully, nodded, and closed the door softly behind her as she left the room.

### III

Footsteps in the hall outside sounded loud for the next few moments as old Gabler, still seated at his desk, traced more designs on his class record. Finally he arose, picked up his books from the desk one at a time, and, as an afterthought, placed his fountain pen in his vest pocket. He went back to his room to read for the rest of the day.

He took dinner that evening at the University Club and listened silently to two young Engineering instructors who were discussing the relative abilities of the quarterback and the end on the Ohio State team. After dinner he returned again to that marvelous room where there were towering shelves of books on every side except the one in which the table and bed were located. He filled his calabash pipe and took down an old, leather-bound book that had once been in the library of some French priest who lived in an ancient town on the banks of the Loire.

At eleven o'clock he closed the book and placed it in its old position on the shelf. He wound the

## TOWN AND GOWN

alarm clock and, sitting on the edge of the bed, began to unlace his shoes. The light from the electric reading lamp cut a keen segment out of the dim room and he stopped for a moment to watch the smoke from his calabash pipe drift slowly toward the gleam.

“Dry as dust?” he muttered half aloud.

He had known for several semesters that students had applied this description to his course. But suppose—suppose that he should rise from his chair and face the class some day. He had always thought that he would some day do that. He would be very quiet and sure. And his voice would be low.

“Dry as dust? And I live with Bazarov and Mademoiselle de Maupin and Ernest Pontifex and Julien Sorel and Raskolnikov. I am they. Dry as dust?”

“And you? You will go through life in a long, dusty procession. Yes, each one of you humped low over the wheel of a little, high automobile, driving always to the next place. You will stop only to buy the cherry-colored refreshment that is advertised on the billboards and to buy the magazines with pink and cream covers. Dry as dust?”

But old Gabler knew that he would never say it. He had thought of it often enough before.

. . . It must have been those pale, eager eyes  
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## DRY AS DUST

that had caused him to place all that hope in her.  
• But, there had been Zeitland.

He pulled down the shades, drew back the coverlet and went to bed. He was very tired.





*Seventh Episode:*

THE FIRST MAN

From the Catalogue of the University:

*“The semester records of an undergraduate are sent by the Registrar to the student’s father or guardian.”*



## VII: *The First Man*

### I

THEY were in the cemetery on the evening of their dance date, seated on the twin tombstones of Ewald N. and Martha Lowe. The granite-carved names and the sculptured angels on the sides of the stones were occasionally revealed by a glow worm or a moon. Here and there an echoing laugh made known that other couples, too, had sought the cemetery after the dance.

The town seemed miles instead of blocks away. The occasional rattle of a street car was startling. Once a strolling couple leaving the place, made the girl start in delicious fear and move closer to her partner as the footsteps crunched the gravel in the walk to the rear.

Cemetery conversations of after-dance couples were generally linked by long silences. Then short whispered speeches. Wonder who Ewald N. and Martha Lowe were? And what did they think of people sitting right here over them and



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talking about them after they were dead and gone? Ooh, such cold stone! Comfy?

That was the moment when their acquaintance really started, the moment when he—abruptly—tried to kiss her. They had had dates, of course, the year before when both of them were juniors, and they had maintained a speaking acquaintance since being in the same five-hour French class as freshmen. But—he tried to kiss her.

“No.”

Her smile was gone. She had slipped out from under the arm that had been about her—gradually—since ten minutes before. She confronted him in the dimness.

“No.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t want to.”

“But—”

“Think this is a petting party?”

“Well . . . you came out here.”

“Well, I thought you were past the high school stuff.”

“All right.” He was sullen.

There was a long silence, the longest of their evening together.

“Yes, I was a damn fool.” His contrition, when it came, was awkward and boyish in its suddenness.

Their forgiveness was dramatic and led them

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rapidly back to whispers and confidences. Before they left the cemetery that night they decided excitedly that they would be, well, kind of friends and partners, you know. No petting. All that was high school stuff, anyhow. Yes, just friends and partners.

“I don’t believe I’m conceited, or anything like that, but we are kind of different from most of them.” His words, as they arose from the tombstones, were the verbal charter of their partnership. “We both of us like to notice people and things and we read a lot and talk things over together. I never knew any other girl in the University you could talk things over with like you can with you. Just sort of man-to-man. All most of them think about is their dates and dances and such stuff.

“And . . . I don’t know; you think a lot more of each other when you’re just partners like this. It’s a lot better when you can be frank and open and talk things over. But you can’t do that with most of them.”

“It’s just like that with most men, too. If they do know anything and can talk, then they don’t dance well or don’t show you a good time. Don’t you hate a person without a sense of humor?”

Within the next two weeks the two acquired a new social status in the University. When the same pair is seen evening after evening by their

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acquaintances it is not long until the world, including the faculty, gently draws to one side and pauses to watch with quizzical wonder and envy. All other men, the three or four different men a week with whom she used to be seen at the Orph or at dances, appeared tacitly to have united in an agreement not to refer to her name any more in the telephone directory. He had left off as suddenly with other girls.

It was not that Ross Boyle and Bee Melton, seniors though they were, had any particular importance in the State University. Neither Pewter Hughes nor Dot Ambrose nor Andy Protheroe nor Caris Dudley would have known either of the two by sight. They were both of that great majority of the State University which belongs to no organizations or to minor ones, which distinguishes itself in no one thing and which never appears in the "annual" except as a unit of one of its own huge groups. Of the six thousand students of the State University Ross Boyle and Bee Melton each knew at the most a few hundred.

She could be seen any morning on her way to a nine o'clock class, coming down the steps of the rooming house with a noisy group of the twenty-odd girls who stayed there. Bobbed hair that stood out pertly to frame each side of her pretty, curious face; eyes that were gray and questioning; quick petite hands—she justified in her ap-  
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pearance the three or four dates she had "rated" each week.

He was slender with the suave slimness of a senior who knows that he can wear well a rough, masculine, sheepskin-lined coat along with the tiniest of neckties. He stayed at the student Y. M. C. A., would graduate in June from the College of Commerce and hoped some day to live in a bungalow with a wife and children and to be a strong member of the Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs.

### II

As partners during the first few weeks they spent most of their evenings at the You'll Come Inn, seated across from each other over chocolate malted milk and talking in glowing abstractions. The couples in the booths about them were petting, they knew, whenever the watchful manager, watchful in the fear of an edict from the executive dean that would ruin his business, was in another part of the place. But Ross Boyle and Bee Melton were steadfast in their discussions.

They decided, after nearly two hours of conversation, that there was a God, in spite of the arguments of these philosophy sharks and other highbrows to the contrary; else how could there be anything so wonderful as the sunset or the sprouting of seeds? They were sure that money



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troubles were the chief cause of discontent in marriage and that a majority of students in the State University were merely wasting their time. They concluded that of all qualities of character, will power was by far the most valuable. They eagerly compared their tastes for olives, egg plant and spinach. They noticed all the people about them and tried to decide what all of them would be doing in life ten years hence.

Before they realized it themselves it was an accepted fact in their small groups that Ross Boyle was rushing Bee Melton—rushing her heavy. They were now seen strolling about the residence streets on Sunday afternoons, hatless even though the March wind was still wintry—certain indication to the world of intensive rushing.

Before long their discussions began to wane. They went to dances now. It seemed to them that they had discussed every subject under the sun.

Both of them tacitly agreed upon that fact one evening when Bee Melton obtained first rights to the kitchen of the house where she roomed for a candy pull. The taffy turned out badly and every subject of conversation they brought up during the evening appeared to be well worn, to be lacking in the something that had once brightened their discussions. And at the dance the next evening they danced closely and silently with elab-

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orate attention to their step. Between dances they talked of the technique of the side step in the "jelly bean."

"That's the wonderful part about our being together," he whispered as they shook hands at parting that evening. "We can get out and have such a wonderful time dancing and things like that and then such a wonderful time just talking things over, too. You generally find that people who like to read and think and notice things are regular sticks at a dance."

There was a certain shyness and restraint in their attitude toward each other that had never been present before. They sometimes had long periods of a silence that was uneasy and watchful. Even their simplest remarks lacked the old ease and brightness.

Their first kiss came without warning to either of them. They were seated on the rail of the porch one night after the dance. Someone went past and they looked into each other's eyes, their faces close together, and listened until the footsteps were almost lost in the next block.

"Bee?"

His tone was challenging and the smile drew his lips into hard, strained lines. She looked at him with anxious eyes.

"Bee!"

His voice came unsteadily and his face showed

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white in the dimness of light from the distant street lamp. He held her nearly hidden in his sheepskin-lined coat and kissed her twice before he released her. Breathing quickly, uncertainly, they faced each other almost in the manner of antagonists.

“It’s all right, isn’t it?” he asked.

She said nothing but did not resist when he kissed her again. It all seemed so easy.

They went to the cemetery the next evening and kissed many times as they sat silent on the tombstones of Ewald N. and Martha Lowe.

“I can’t see anything wrong about petting, can you?” he asked in a whisper, as they were leaving. “After all I think it’s the kind of a spirit you have that really counts in anything. It makes a lot of difference who it is, too. Petting might be wrong the way some of them look at it, but we have the right kind of a spirit about it. Don’t we now?”

### III

The weeks passed. They were together nearly every evening; in the cemetery, on the porch or strolling about the dim residence streets. Their conversation was brief and whispered. They kissed long and often.

There was, apparently, no reason for their first quarrel. She suddenly tore herself from his

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arms in a burst of tears one night and went into the house without a word. He did not attend classes the next day until he had arranged a meeting with her at the English seminar and had "made up" after a series of notes.

Neither of them would have been able to explain what caused them to throw aside all restraint for the first time one night in the cemetery. Love of that sort had seemed far away and mysterious and connected with whispered scandals about the University or with summary dismissals by the executive dean. Long ago when they "discussed things" the subject had held an ashamed fascination for them.

A moon that groped from under clouds showed the dried wreaths of flowers beneath the angels in bas relief on either side of the tombstone as fresh, dewy flowers and it gave the sudden faces of a strolling couple leaving the cemetery an unearthly loveliness before it blotted them out of sight. It stole from Ross Boyle and Bee Melton all of their old sanity and made them for the moment the selves they did not dare to be.

It was all vague to Ross Boyle until afterward. He was dazed by the completeness and suddenness of her surrender. He had thought that she would refuse. But she had suddenly dropped all the watchfulness and careful guard of weeks. She



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seemed—strangely—to be stronger in surrender than she had been before in defense.

What, he wondered, had confused his sense of right and wrong? Was it because she had appeared so natural and innocent of any evil? What, he wondered, had made him lose his hold on himself and hurl himself into that hour of godhood and ecstasy and power—and wrong?

He could hardly believe that it was she sitting beside him. Her dark hair stood out so courageously and her eyes trusted herself and him. His face, deep in the sheepskin collar, flared in the glow of his cigarette. For a long time they were silent. There was a strange trust and tenderness in the grasp of her hand on his arm.

“Are you sorry, Bee?”

“No, are you?”

“No,” he lied.

He knew that he was sorry. He felt alone and envied her that fearlessness and exaltation. Women were mad, he told himself bitterly. You’d think they’d be most afraid, most sorry; but they weren’t. She seemed untroubled.

All of his convictions gnawed at him and made him miserable. It had been different the times when he had been intimate with the town girls on rummy dates. Someone else had been the first man with them. And he had always had a dream

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of a girl he was to marry, one who would be above sordidness.

“And then—” He could not help bringing it up again. “I wouldn’t have unless you’d have wanted to, too. You don’t blame me, Bee?”

“Why?”

He did not know what to answer, now that apologies or contrition did not seem needed. He fumbled for a cigarette to gain time and noticed that he had a lighted one between his fingers.

“I don’t think that anything could be wrong—with us,” he said, and almost believed it as he saw the response in her eyes. “It’s the kind of a spirit you have that counts. Anyway, we love each other so much that we’re just the same as married.”

He kissed her many times. He tried in his kisses to bring back that ecstasy and power that he had felt before, but all the time his conscience was dinning relentlessly at him.

She had been pure and he had wronged her. He had been the first man. The trouble was that everything had seemed so right, just in the way she looked and acted. He longed to talk to her about it. She was in his arms now, her face buried against his shoulder.

No, there was only one honorable course open to him. He had wronged her and he must marry her. That would right everything.

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“Funny, isn’t it?” She was speaking and her eyes burned strangely into his as she drew her head back from his shoulder. “Think of all these people here—dead. And we’ll both be that way some day, too. And we love each other. We seem like the only people in the world tonight.”

He kissed her again and wondered at such strange, topsy-turvy thoughts. His watch, as he stopped to look at it in the glow of the cigarette, showed that it was nearly three.

It was misting a little as they arose silently from the tombstone. The moon was buried behind a bank of clouds. Their footsteps on the gravel walk sounded ominously loud to him and he was irritated by her lilting walk.

“Just about three months ago that we were here for the first time. Remember?”

“Such a solemn boy!” she chaffed.

It irritated him, too, when she turned about, just under the arched gateway, and, with a gay, shrill laugh that shattered into startled echoes against the tombstones: “Good-by, ghosts!”

It had begun to rain as they reached the cement sidewalk. They hurried on silently. Once they stopped under the shelter of a tree in a long kiss and embrace, then went on arm-in-arm down the dimly lit street.

*Eighth Episode:*

UNITY, COHERENCE AND  
EMPHASIS

From the Bulletin of the University:  
*“Courses of especial interest to  
teachers are offered during the  
Summer Session.”*





## VIII: *Unity, Coherence and Emphasis*

### I

NOW, Doctor," he would say in his crisply cheerful way—he always called Dean Fannicott "Doctor". He would rise alertly, his head held a bit on one side and his broad mustache twinkling as he spoke. "Doctor, all my preparation on this subject has led me to believe—"

At the desk Dean Fannicott would listen coldly. In another moment everybody would have lapsed back into drowsiness, for "Professor" Hurlihy's recitations were interminably long. When he concluded he would seat himself, his short legs wide-spread, his eyes on Dean Fannicott trustingly and his pudgy arm, with its stiff cuffs, lodge emblem cuff links and hair covering the wrists nearly to the fingers, over the back of the seat in front of the sophomore girl making up the last year's flunk.

His appearance stamped him as being of a different world than either the women teachers in neat shirtwaists and serge skirts or the few under-

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graduates of the summer school class. His little blue eyes under the uneven brows were kindly and important. His mustache was serious and responsible and he brushed his thin hair with water so that it nearly covered his bald spot. His shoes were a well-shined black with the squarest of toes; he wore a large gold watch chain across the front of his blue serge vest and his neckties were wide, sober neckties, firmly fixed with a fire opal stick pin.

During the July days he was always the most alert in Dean Fannicott's class. When through the open windows the campus was hazy with cornbelt heat, when the catalpas drooped and when the stone bench presented by the class of 1905 shone hot and forbidding in unshaded grass, Daniel L. Hurlihy sat erect in his seat, his short forearm moving in the taking of notes with the prescribed muscular movement taught in grade school.

"Excellent course, the doctor's," he would say to his wife evenings up in their hot, stuffy little room. She, a tired, thin woman in limp lawn dresses who seemed always to be brushing strands of hair up from her damp forehead, would listen to him admiringly. He would invariably finish with a repetition in a tone that was genially final and emphatic: "Yes, sir, an excellent course, excellent."

## UNITY, COHERENCE, EMPHASIS

It was more than twenty years before that Daniel L. Hurlihy and his wife (both teaching then, he at six hundred and she at four hundred dollars a year) had planned to attend the summer session of the State University. But Junior had arrived and two years later, Clarice May. The family income was decreased as the children took Mrs. Hurlihy permanently from her teaching. Seven or eight years later, when the house was almost paid for, and when the summer session did not seem far distant, Clarice May fell sick. The expenses for her operation postponed the summer session several more years.

But when "Professor" Hurlihy's salary had reached the figure of twelve hundred dollars, when he was principal of schools in charge of eleven women teachers, and teaching only civics and rhetoric, himself, when he was grand master of the lodge, they decided that the time had come.

He had especially looked forward to meeting Fannicott, the author of that invaluable book, *Principles of Rhetoric*.

Fannicott's *Principles of Rhetoric!*

What Harden high school student had not thumbed that green volume and mouthed its salient principles: "Un'ty, coherunce an' empha-sus"? By proxy, Fannicott was almost a citizen of Harden. "Professor" Hurlihy had procured him his citizenship by his vigorous efforts to in-



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culcate in the youth of Harden the teachings of *Principles of Rhetoric*.

“Turn to page sixty-seven,” he would say in the classroom without so much as a glance at the green text book. “You will notice there that Doctor Fannicott says: ‘A change of tense within a sentence is desirable and necessary in certain instances’. Now turn to page seventy-one for examples.”

When young ignoramuses failed to grasp what Hurlihy called the “great outstanding fundamentals”—unity, coherence and emphasis—their failure seemed almost an open affront to Fannicott. To them, the “professor” quoted sternly from the preface: “The value of constant application cannot be too much emphasized”.

He even read the book at home in the evening. Then the little green volume seemed to have dropped the classroom air of discipline and to have assumed a mellow, friendly, personal quality. Some of the “wrong” examples (“to be rewritten”) appeared to contain a deep and delicious sparkle of wit. Some of the definitions had in them almost the warmth of a handshake, as from Fannicott to Hurlihy—“The province of rhetoric is bounded only by human thought.”

More than once the idea had occurred to Daniel L. Hurlihy that he might sometime grasp Fannicott’s hand and say, “In all my experience as an

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## UNITY, COHERENCE, EMPHASIS

instructor I have never noted a single discrepancy in *Principles of Rhetoric*."

Now that he was in summer school and even in Fannicott's class, the idea had grown to be an ambition. But it had not been easy to talk to Fannicott; after class the assistant dean either hurried out or was caught in a net of questions from undergraduates. Hurlihy had never found him in his office. Of course he had met Fannicott on the campus but the dean was hurrying along with absorbed eyes straight ahead—he passed without recognizing the "professor" and Hurlihy felt it would be a bit undignified to call after him or overtake him. It was hardly the way for one educator to approach another.

The summer session was nearly over. Hurlihy was determined not to return to Harden without bearing his tribute to Fannicott. . . . When he attended teachers' institute in the fall, he would say casually to County Superintendent Bute: "As Doctor Fannicott said to me, recently—" or "as I told Doctor Fannicott—"

## II

"Well, I think I'll drop in and see Doctor Fannicott tonight," he said carelessly to his wife one evening at supper, as carelessly as if a visit with Fannicott might be suggested on the spur of the

## TOWN AND GOWN

moment. He continued cheerfully, "Few things in *Principles of Rhetoric* I'd like to discuss with him."

Mrs. Hurlihy was silent for a moment in the face of her mate's blithe intrepidity. "Oh, yes," she finally said.

"That chapter on coherence for example."

The calmness of his demeanor impressed her. "I hope you see his wife," she said. "I'd like to know what kind of a little woman she is."

After their supper at the delicatessen cafeteria, Daniel L. Hurlihy set forth, sturdy in his blue serge and lodge emblems to make entrance into the unexplored regions of the faculty district. Mrs. Hurlihy looked after him proudly and returned to the rooming-house to prepare her drawings for art and design class.

The "professor" found the number he was seeking on a severe stucco house with the date of its erection in Roman numerals above the dark paneled door. . . . At the side of the house, a barefoot boy eyed him suspiciously and sullenly as he directed the stream of water from a garden hose to an unusually large great toe.

"Doctor Fannicott's boy!" Daniel L. Hurlihy's discovery seemed portentous. He scraped his feet on the steps, considering the brass knocker, uneasily. He was relieved to find a bell and rang it with firm precision.

## UNITY, COHERENCE, EMPHASIS

The door opened somewhat abruptly. Dean Fannicott, a bit ruffled of hair, his eyes tired behind the shell-rimmed glasses and blinking at the dusk, faced him. The dean's brusque features were not yet enlightened by recognition. There was an expression around his lips as if he were about to say, "Well—?"

"Good-evening, Doctor." Daniel L. Hurlihy's tone was hearty and his mustache broke bushily into a smile. "I was just going by your way and thought I'd drop in for a second. I can't stay long—I promised Mrs. Hurlihy I'd be back soon. Terribly hot this evening isn't it?"

Until the mention of the name there had been an expectant look in Dean Fannicott's eyes as if he were awaiting the return of a theme. He nodded, smiled equivocally, and opened the screen door in invitation. . . .

"Yes, annoyingly warm," the assistant dean of the department of English finally said; and in his polite classroom manner, "Please have a chair, Mr. Hurlihy."

Daniel L. Hurlihy seated himself, his short legs outspread and his hat carefully placed beside him on the velour divan. He looked about at the dull rugs, the tapestries on the walls and the vague, low-hung pictures. "Very cool house you have here, Doctor," said he.



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“Even in this corn-belt heat,” said the Dean, “we find it rather comfortable.”

Daniel L. Hurlihy crossed his legs. His hands were clasped moistly about his knee. With elaborate attention, he drew a handkerchief from his pocket, unfolded it, and wiped his forehead. “I see by the Journal,” he said, “that there is the largest attendance registered at this summer session ever known in the history of the university. Let me see—oh yes! I believe the article said there were three thousand and some here? Or, no—maybe that wasn’t the figure. Anyhow, I suppose that makes your work pretty heavy, doesn’t it, Doctor?”

Dean Fannicott acknowledged the question with an attentive nod.

“Well, it’s a mighty fine thing, this summer work. My wife and I have found it excellent. Our high school work, of course, prevents us from attending the regular session. Now there is nothing we would like better than to be able to come down here for several years, even at our age—” Daniel L. Hurlihy chuckled “—and we’re neither of us youngsters! But since that is out of the question we find the summer school an excellent substitute. I have about four hundred in my school at Harden that keep me right busy, I can tell you—but you know how that is.”

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The dean's answer was politely modulated in tone and accompanied by his careful smile.

Dusk was creeping indecisively into darkness. Fannicott arose and turned a switch that flooded the room with soft light. There was an impressive silence.

From without the open windows the summer night echoed with monotonous sounds—the banging of screen doors, the buzzing of June bugs, the ceaseless swish of the garden hose, a child singing, “Needle’s eye that doth supply” over and over with dreary insistence.

Daniel L. Hurlihy put his head on one side and smiled broadly to indicate that he was about to make a jest. “That child,” he said, jerking his head toward the windows, “has grasped your principle of ‘emphasis through repetition’, Doctor.”

“Miss Griffith’s niece,” observed the dean with distaste.

Daniel L. Hurlihy felt that he had cleverly introduced the important topic. He grasped it now, tenaciously. His voice had even more of its usual loud cheerfulness. “Well, Doctor, I’ve wanted to tell you for a long time how much I appreciate your book. An excellent work; the most outstanding I have ever used in all my experience as an instructor.”

“Ah,” Dean Fannicott regarded his visitor with

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tepid interest. "May I ask, Mr. Hurlihy, which book?"

"*Principles of Rhetoric*. An excellent work, Doctor. I have never found a discrepancy in a single explanation. The chapters on unity, coherence and emphasis are particularly valuable—yes sir, particularly valuable."

Through the spectacled mask of Dean Fannicott's faculty poise wavered a look of doubt. "Thank you," he said, dryly, "*Principles of Rhetoric*, I am given to understand by my publishers, enjoyed at one time a fairly extensive use by high schools. That was, of course,—as you no doubt know—before it became obsolete and superseded by the newer methods. Naturally." As he dealt these death-blows to his brain-child his voice became almost genial.

"Oh, yes," said Daniel L. Hurlihy, dully. "I knew." . . . The air seemed thick as butter. He wiped away the sweat that streamed from his efficient pores.

He arose and lamely cocked his head on one side. "Well, Doctor, I've already 'stayed myself out' as they say down in Harden County. I'm afraid I must be going." . . . At the door he awkwardly extended his hand. "Good night, Doctor."

"Good night, Mr. Hurlihy."

"Professor" Hurlihy smiled, nodded and went  
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down the steps . . . slowly trudged back through the hot dusk.

### III

In their little room, the curtains hung still and limp at the open windows. The rockers looked sticky as if they had been varnished with glue.

Mrs. Daniel L. Hurlihy, in a discouraged voile dress, sat at the study table, making a sketch of "still life" for her Art and Design class. She was drawing a banana and two oranges—the models were in a glass dish on the bureau. She put down her pencil as her husband entered.

"Well, it's a hot night," he said as greeting. "It'll be a hard night to sleep." He sat down heavily on the bed and fanned himself with his hat.

"Was he home?" she asked, irrelevantly.

"Who? Oh—Doctor Fannicott. . . . Well, we had a great little visit. A great little visit. . . . I saw his boy. Not a large lad. Not as large as Junior—"

"What is Mrs. Fannicott like?"

"Didn't you know she was dead?" He seemed irritated with her lack of information. "I thought I told you before when you asked me, that she was dead."

"How did he act?"



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“*Act?* He acted like anybody would act. A very congenial man. Very congenial.”

“I know he was glad you called, Daniel. He must be *nice*. You know from reading his *Principles of Rhetoric* I imagine he’s a great deal like County Superintendent Bute.” She turned back to the table and erased the orange she had drawn.

“*Principles of Rhetoric*,” said Daniel L. Hurlihy, and his voice was limp as if the heat had destroyed its old, crisp cheerfulness, “—we-ll, I don’t wish to decry the doctor, but it may be the book is a little bit obsolete. A lit-tle bit ob-so-lete.”

*Ninth Episode:*

**BASS DRUMS**

**From the Annual Catalogue of the Uni-  
versity: “*Women students are  
under the immediate supervision of  
the Dean of Women.*”**



## IX: *Bass Drums*

### I

**O**N one side Dean Agnes Watson. On the other side several thousand young virgins with knee-conscious skirts and rouged ear tips and rolled-down stockings and bobbed hair and plucked eyebrows and baby stares and affected lisps and a terrible frankness. And several thousand men students who roared about in high-power, low-slung automobiles apparently in an endless pursuit of the several thousand young virgins.

The odds were all against the dean of women, at least in the way of numbers. But the power and the regulations of the State University were behind her and she was determined to—

“Stop it! Stop it!”

The words almost shrieked themselves through her mind as she waited, waited in her brightly lit little apartment for ten o'clock to come. The round of Saturday night fraternity and sorority dances wasn't well started until ten o'clock.

The dean of women was going out to see for



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herself this time. Things had come to a climax. Even the Sunday sections of the Chicago newspapers were asking the world in bold-face type if the modern co-ed were really bad or only frivolous.

“There must be an end to it.”

The Dean of Women of the State University compressed her lips as she remembered former tours of inspection. How these overdone virgins and sleek youths had greeted Executive Dean Abrams and herself with too obvious cordiality and had “entertained” them effusively. How the dancing that had gone on while they were there had been conducted with strained decorum; youth and girl at least a foot apart, galloping awkwardly through the unfamiliar measures of a waltz. All a farce and the dean of women knew it. The jazz had begun ten minutes after they were gone.

The young savages condescended not at all to ordinary chaperons. They merely relegated them to the obscurity of armchairs and sent suffering freshmen in to “entertain” them while they wriggled unashamedly to the beating jazz.

But now . . . Dean Agnes Watson would see for herself. Not with any idea of personal or petty vengeance but to strike at the very root of the evil that to her mind was gnawing at the morals of the State University like a foul ulcer—modernity. The modernity of jazz and jungle  
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dancing, of raw styles and rouge, of novels and frankness and unashamed sex. She knew positively that they were not dancing six inches apart in obedience to the edict she had issued when the shimmy dances had come straight from the black and tan cabarets of Chicago to the hectic sex-swirl that was the State University.

It wasn't easy for the dean of women, this resolution to go out alone and try to see from the sidewalk what was going on behind those half-drawn drapes from which issued the tom-tom rhythm of jazz music. She would have preferred to go accompanied by Prof. Gabler or Dean Abrams and to announce herself in the regular way.

"But something has to be done," she told herself as she waited for ten o'clock to come. "It is an unusual situation and it must be handled in an unusual manner."

Yes, something drastic. Hadn't she tried for two years to be fair and tolerant and mindful of the indiscretions of youth? And what had it accomplished?

The handkerchief incident! Her full, smooth cheeks felt suddenly hot as she thought of the humiliation it had heaped upon her. She had meant to be so understanding and so tolerant. Addressing at the Y. W. C. A. a group of several

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hundred freshman girls she had warned them of the dangers of modern dancing.

“And if . . . well, I believe that it is my duty to tell you . . . if you should ever feel that a dance is influencing you adversely, don't hesitate . . . don't hesitate. Drop your handkerchief or do something else concrete to break the spell. Music and moods can be dangerous.”

For the next three semesters the student daily newspaper and the student annual and the humorous magazine had carried sly, intangible references, puns, jests about the subject of dropping handkerchiefs. Just as these publications (she sometimes wished that they were suppressed) had mocked her in cartoon and joke column about her address at the girls' gym class in which she had declared that the co-ed could aspire to nothing better in life than to be sweet and helpful. Just as these publications brazenly hinted that she and Dean Abrams had paid stool pigeons or spies circulating among the student body to report infractions of rules.

Oh, they were hard, brazen, common—yes, vulgar. She could not help feeling bitter about it at times. They dressed like chorus girls and they seemed, many of them, to have no higher ideals. There were, of course, hundreds of sweet, lovable girls in the University but the dean of women had regretfully to admit that they were not the most

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## BASS DRUMS

prominent or popular as compared with Dorothy Ambrose and Patricia Perdue and *such* girls.

It was the brazen, frank thing that seemed to attract in this perverted day; the girl who barely kept on the safe side of expulsion from the University. Like Patricia Perdue who, in a student newspaper article giving the favorite mottoes of campus undergraduate celebrities, declared hers to be a quotation from Balzac: "Woman's virtue is Man's greatest invention." Or Dorothy Ambrose, the picture of whose pretty head was published in last year's student annual as if it were growing on the statue of Venus de Milo.

In the latter incident Dean Watson had taken immediate steps to bring about the expulsion of the guilty editor and had called Miss Ambrose into her office to assure her of the sympathy of the University with her in her humiliation.

"It is a terrible occurrence." Dean Watson was agitated.

Poised, sophisticated, blasé, Dot Ambrose crossed her knees and smiled wearily.

"Well, really, you know, Dean Watson, I don't mind it. It was meant only as a little joke. I think a girl ought to be a good sport if she gets roasted in the annual."

As the girl recrossed her legs Dean Watson noticed that an inch of white knee showed between the hem of her skirt and her rolled-down



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silk stockings. Almost shyly the dean of women pointed to it. Nonchalantly, even tolerantly, Dot Ambrose pulled her skirt down.

The chief reason why Ted Ireland, the editor who published the picture, wasn't expelled proved to be the skilful testimony of Dot Ambrose on his behalf.

What a hideous contrast it all was to the little eastern college where the dean of women had taken her A. B. before going abroad to study! She thought of the closely guarded dormitories, the quiet campus, the stringent rules, the sweetness and modesty of the girls then—and now—

The vulgarity of their dress, their frankness, their cigarettes, their dancing, the things they read, the shows they saw—a mad sex-swirl! There was still sweetness and modesty and religion even now, but one of these young hoydens of modernity was enough to make her forget and overlook a score of the real young women of the State University.

## II

It was ten o'clock. The dean of women went to the full-length mirror in the hall of her little apartment and put on her coat and hat. She looked at herself carefully in the glass, the virgin of forty-four years, and noted the paleness of her cheeks. She had on a satin waist that was

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meant to serve as an example of a garment that was at the same time modest, sensible and sufficiently modish. Her carefully corseted figure was almost voluptuously youthful in appearance and her serge skirt draped neatly over her low-heeled shoes. Her features, the careful brown eyes, the fine nose, smooth skin and full lips, did not come within ten years of accurately proclaiming her real age.

She was inwardly agitated as she closed the door to the apartment. . . . Fraternity Row was melodious with lights; mellow Japanese lanterns, exotic drapery, dim porches. Giant shadows against the windows, the dancers could be seen inside the Pi Omega sorority house; improbable marionettes swaying grotesquely to the low, turbulent notes of a jazz orchestra.

The dean of women stood silent under the drooping catalpa trees at the edge of the lawn. This spot was shelteringly dark and there was about it the moist, green smell of darkness and of grass and trees and impending rain. It all came as a contrast to the purple, sensuous perfume that she felt must be intertwined with the music coming from the part-open windows. As her eyes grew accustomed to the night she saw a couple seated among the vines at the foot of the brick porch. They were silently embracing. Her heart beat faster and she turned her head. From

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the blackness of the A. O. G. fraternity house just across the narrow street she saw four tiny cigarettes glowing. She counted them twice.

The leaves of the black catalpa overhead were black splotches on the paler sky and there was a weak, sentimental moon. The dean of women felt her hand trembling futilely as the music stopped with a harsh, leering crash. She hovered closer to the shadows.

A flash of cream and black under the Japanese lanterns on the porch and she saw a couple run down the steps and out across the pavement. She heard their footsteps stop and lost sight of them in the shadows that blotted the A. O. G. porch from her view. When the music started they came back, running, hand in hand, and the dean of women saw four cigarettes glow again on the steps of the A. O. G. house.

Inside the Pi Omega house they were dancing once more. Six inches apart? No. None. Frankly clamped together were the shadows she saw.

She watched for another moment, then turned and left. . . . It was hateful to her: this. But something had to be done, something that would strike at the very roots of the evil. It was for their good—and they scoffed at her.

She resisted a sudden inclination to tiptoe as she passed a strolling couple on the sidewalk. She



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noticed that they were holding hands. With nervous little pats she smoothed out a tiny wrinkle in her glove.

She did not stop when she passed the next sorority house. One curtain was up and she scrutinized the dancers as she walked by. No, not so vulgar at this old and conservative sorority. They were, possibly, dancing a bit too close, but the porch was well lit and there was a lighter, more youthful note to the music. The dancing was faster, more complicated.

The Y. W. C. A. she held to be a model of propriety. From a block away she could see the dancers through the unshaded windows. The wide porch was glaring with incandescence and the figures within were loping long and jerkily to a fast one-step. As she walked by on the other side of the street she could see every movement. Many of the couples were the regulation six inches apart.

### III

She turned off Fraternity Row at the next dark corner. (She did wish that the city would get that broken street lamp repaired.)

For it was, after all, the Alpha Upsilon fraternity that had most aroused her suspicions and that had been the principal reason for her tour of inspection. Veiled rumors about the dancing



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at the "Up" house had come to her lately. Their jazz orchestra. The one "moonlight" dance each evening when the lights in the house were turned off. Miss Griffith, of the Department of English, had heard some of her undergraduates say that the shimmy and the jelly bean were done more daringly there than at any other house on the campus. Three "Ups" had been expelled the year before for drunkenness. And there were those stories of parties with chorus girls. Nothing actually proved, of course, but . . .

She stopped on the sidewalk in the shadows of the giant maples. There was something sinister in the dark outline against the pale stars of the three-story stone building set far back in the lawn among the black silhouettes of trees. The lights in the French windows were so grouped as to give the appearance of a face, an old, lecherous face with one eye shut and mouth cynically awry. The porch was quite dim and she was too far away to see even shadows through the thick drapes and the small panes of the windows.

A chill, damp mist rose from the grass as she started cautiously to walk across the lawn. The dean of women drew her coat more closely about her throat. There under the low trees in the silent lawn the sudden clattering of a street car a few blocks away startled her. The automobiles

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drawn up to the curb in front seemed out of place.

The shadows were inky by the side of the vine-clad pagoda. It was only twenty feet from the house. There had been no music since she arrived and the sound of voices together with an occasional laugh came faintly to her from the seemingly opaque depths of the old stone "Up" house. Nothing could be seen through the drapes behind the French windows except when some figures passed close to them.

The chaperons? They probably had the chaperons in the reading room on the second floor, with freshmen "entertaining" them.

The music started. The dim light which shimmered like a veil from the windows to the grass at her feet was suddenly interrupted by long, dangling shadows. Then, without warning, the lights went out. The dean of women blinked and started back as she faced a first floor shrouded in darkness so thick that she could not even see the outlines of the porch. *The "moonlight" dance!*

It was a strange, throbbing, discordant music that she had never heard before, not even from the other jazz orchestras about the campus. It began with the crash of harsh bells, the drawn-out moan of saxophones and the uncouth reverberation of a drum. In another moment it was

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a living thing; a mottled serpent twitching moistly in and out of impossible harmonies, threshing itself brassily against the night air, sometimes darting a scarlet, forked tongue.

The drum and cornets stopped and the saxophones twisted up and up in a squeal of savage invitation. Then all joined in a moaning blare . . . Venus leering.

The dean of women felt her heart beating so hard that its blows against her nerveless body seemed to be sapping her strength. With trembling hand she clung to the vines of the pagoda.

There was and there was not a harmony to this stripped, twisting music. It consisted more of a naked rhythm that went on in its menacing purpose undisturbed by the blasts of the cornets and the saxophones, a rhythm that never faltered in its double beating. Yes, it was the drum that caused it.

She closed her eyes for a moment and the rhythm carried to her a sudden picture of dim, exotic foliage and under it naked savages on their knees, swaying from side to side . . . swaying . . . swaying. She opened her eyes almost in terror.

Her limbs felt impotent and her breath came quickly. It was even more horrible now, for the cornets and saxophones had stopped and the monotonous beat of the bass drum seemed to carry

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with it all of the leering and throbbing of the negroid melody that had been silenced. The drum and the slow, accompanying shuffle of the feet.

Boom . . . Boom . . . Boom! Shrinking back among the vines she felt almost a physical pain at the blows of sound.

More ominous yet were the dancers' steps—old, slow, measured. A silence which seemed suffocating between each movement. Swaying . . . swaying . . . swaying.

The dean of women suddenly felt old and haggard and helpless, beaten down by the leering rhythm and the shuffle of feet. The picture of slowly swaying savages came to her again and a terrifying weakness passed over her like a hot, moist wind. She felt puny and powerless in the sight of the world's nakedness, pitted against an obscene infinity.

Her lips twitching, she turned her pale face to the stars.

“Oh, Christ!”

She turned, stumbled, and fled to the sidewalk. . . .

Two days later the dean of women issued a formal edict prohibiting bass drums at University dances.





*Tenth Episode:*

THE STRANGEST SERENADE

From the Annual Catalogue of the University: "*The purpose of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is, first, to secure to its students a liberal education, including both the humanities and the sciences.*"



## X: *The Strangest Serenade*

### I

**M**RS. J. BLEEKER MANFRED would never attend one of Kiril Kuldaroff's recitals. The fact was remarked only because Mrs. J. Bleeker Manfred did the things everyone else did and everyone was going to hear the violinist, Kuldaroff, that year.

Even the most profanely cynical free verse writer of the day grew tenderly profane over the "hairy fists" and "guts" that he felt were suggested by Kuldaroff's mad music. And by way of contrast the poem spoke of another quality——

"Be still, damn you! . . . That last soaring note  
Is a frail yellow leaf  
Twirled against a slate sky . . . summer is ended."

Although she learned from all sources of the poignancy and passion and strangeness that the genius Kuldaroff put into his playing Betty Manfred was gently obdurate in her determination never to hear him. Her husband (who was *the* Manfred, famous for Manfred's Table Salt)



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stepped briskly into her dressing room one afternoon, announcing:

“I took a box for Kuldaroff’s concert Saturday. He seems to be quite the thing this season, Betty. Very curious fellow, they say. A Russian. Or Pole, is it? Never can remember these foreigners’ off’s and iski’s. Why don’t they have decent names?”

Betty was seated before a mirror examining a tiny wrinkle at the corner of her left eye. She had just had her back massaged. The creamy flesh that had been pummeled, kneaded with perfumed lotions and powdered, curved into a delicate, velvety little roll along the top of her tight black and silver bodice.

“Oh, it’s impossible,” she said, continuing to smooth the insidious wrinkle with a pointed forefinger, “I have a million engagements for Saturday.”

Of course the matter dropped there.

## II

Her achievement of the glittering name, Manfred, had been an ambition realized shortly after her graduation from the State University.

Mrs. J. Bleeker Manfred, née Betty Udell, was one of those rare people who achieve what they want and like it after they get it. Most girls

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of her class achieved or struggled to achieve what their mothers wanted for them. It follows that they did not like what they got. But dictates were not laid down by an aspiring parent for Betty to follow. Her widowed mother was meek and hesitant. Beyond complying hopefully with Betty's careful plans she was a negligible adjunct to her daughter's ambitions. Betty considered that Mrs. Udell did very nicely as a respectable background; she was slim, dressed in soft black crêpes and had her hair marcelled regularly.

As Betty Udell, she had perceived that the gods had been good to her but not good enough. She had beauty and some money but not as much money as she wanted; adulation, but not as much as she thought she deserved; and really no social position worth mentioning, she felt. It gave her a little ache of longing—which was really in part a genuine desire for beauty—to see Mrs. Richie Gespell in an ermine cloak, ashes-of-roses satin fluttering in draperies about her silken knees, step out of a limousine and enter a theater door.

Betty was keenly conscious that the society column knew the name of Udell no more than Paris knew her hat and gown. It was not that she failed of loveliness, but she was convinced that she would look more lovely in ermine—that ashes-of-roses satin would become her more than the woman in the limousine. And she went on to

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covet the limousine and the theater tickets and the tall escort—a celebrity—in his high silk hat. Betty Udell's aspirations seldom fell short of what she deemed the magnificent.

She set about quietly, subtly to achieve them. There was an extraordinary quality of strength, of hardness, beneath her appearance of soft innocence. She was tall with an appealing slenderness but her face with its expression of engaging lucidity matched her slenderness rather than her height. The faint rouge she dusted delicately in two childishly round spots on her cheekbones gave her really satin skin its final allurements. Her eyes were touchingly youthful and wide and blue. And most wistful of all was that short, tender upper lip of hers that always curled away a little from the two tiny white front teeth with the slight gap between them.

### III

At the State University Dean Agnes Watson had pronounced her "unconditionally sweet". This impression was exactly the one Betty had meant the dean to have. She had made certain overcuts. Signed excuses from Dean Watson were convenient, to say the least.

She had decided to go to the State University after a long consideration of which her mother



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knew nothing. It was near the city but not too near; it was not too aristocratic for her to be able to attain its highest circles; it had a champion football team that year; and, most important, certain girls from her high school club had been taken into the sorority of Pi Omega.

She intended to "make" Pi Omega.

Betty Udell did not see the lichens on the old campus trees, the ivy on crumbling University Hall, the carved "Time goes, Love stays" on the sun dial, the golden light and wavering shadows that mottled the grass in late afternoon. She noted a Rolls Royce parked across from the auditorium, the Sigma Chi emblem on a passing junior's vest, an expensive squirrel wrap worn by a girl with a Pi Phi pin and the unutterable dowdiness of a woman instructor whom someone had indicated to her as her "adviser." She could scarcely concentrate her mind on this woman long enough to answer the questions important to her curriculum. Over the woman's head her eyes were absorbing with their wide, innocent stare all the details they could glean as to the dress, manners and fraternities of the State University.

There went Marj Rider, a high school acquaintance, at the side of Dot Ambrose. Dot was also from Chicago. She was known everywhere. She was a Pi Omega. She had made it the im-



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portant sorority it was. Envyng the Rider girl Betty looked steadily at her, hoping she would speak, but she was chattering and glancing about with proud, nervously darting eyes that observed everything and nothing.

Betty felt nervous, too, and intent. The superiority she had experienced for a brief moment of exhilaration at the shabby station had vanished. The State University was all so very large and confusing and it was so important to make the right kind of a start. She was a bit anxious about the dates she had made with sororities. She was to go to the Upsilon Phi house that evening for dinner and would take tea with the Kappas the next afternoon. But she had no engagements with the Pi Omega's—yet.

“Do you know what you'd like your major to be?” inquired Miss Griffith, the instructor who was advising her.

“No,” said Betty helplessly. The little, frightened breath she drew was in dread of Pi Omega's indifference to her, but Miss Griffith, no doubt, attributed it to awe and reverence for the department.

“I am sorry I have not the time to go into this more thoroughly with you,” said the adviser, indulgently, rubbing her broad brow with a large, capable hand. “If I were you I should just take a general course in Liberal Arts and Sciences and

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decide upon my major later. Though I'm sure you would enjoy English." (Miss Griffith was of the Department of English herself and rather doubted if it could be worth one's while to specialize in anything else.)

"Oh, yes, I'm sure I would," said Betty in her high, childish voice, smiling her curling rose-leaf smile. She moved out of the crowded office with a sense of boredom at the dowdy woman's slow, careful voice and hastily scrawled "Gen. L. A. and S." in purple ink where it said COURSE on her study list, and "English" where it stipulated MAJOR.

"Scared child," observed Miss Griffith to Dean Fannicott at the next desk.

"Quite charming," he commented coldly.

It was with no more ado that Betty Udell decided for her college career what serious minded students hesitated over for months, even years. It was with no more ado that she elected the courses suggested to her by juniors as "pipes" and bought all the text books written by instructors which they, themselves, recommended as "not necessary but valuable to the course".

In one class which a solicitous upper classman had recommended as soft, Betty was horribly alarmed to hear the instructor—a tall, loose-jointed, bushy-browed Professor Dyrcks, who sat carelessly on the desk and continually scratched

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a badly-shaven cheek with his thumb—to hear this man, who moved his head so awkwardly and smiled so politely as he called the roll, drawl in a delightful voice, “I—ah—hear that this course is known as a—ah—pipe. Now, it may have been in the—ah—uh—dim past. However that may be, times change, times change. In the future, my dear young friends, this course will be proclaimed as the stiffest course at the State University. . . . *In short, not more than one or two of you need expect passing remarks at all!*”

The huge assemblage of students who had enrolled in good faith that the whole thing was “nothing but a bunch of lectures,” as upper classmen had assured them, shifted uneasily and wondered if they could get permission to drop the course.

“The nasty old beast!” Betty raged inwardly. She felt a keen sense of the injustice of the world that put her at the mercy of a scraggly-haired, sloppily dressed man like this one sprawled against his desk. She was furious with all misguided upper classmen, especially Upsilon Phi’s—“a cheap bunch,” she had decided days ago. “Not even a national sorority.”

Betty found it easy to convince Miss Griffith, as her adviser, that she must drop Dyrcks’ course. It was also necessary to go to the professor to get his permission.



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She entered the English office one Saturday morning, wearing a purple broadcloth suit with high choker collar of fluffy gray fur. She hoped that her smart appearance would indirectly further her cause. Her short blonde hair stood out in silky ringlets.

She was vaguely conscious of a swarthy man she had seen in class, sitting on the bench outside Professor Dyrcks' private door. The office was dim, musty. A cottonwood, half stripped of its leaves, scraped one naked branch sadly, monotonously against the unwashed window.

The swarthy man moved over and she sat down beside him on the bench. He glanced up from a blue book lettered "From The Verse Of Li Po". Staring at her, his wide, shining, black eyes were like mirrors absorbing her image and, hazily, she felt disturbed by this look. She tabulated him as an "insolent foreigner".

Betty had little curiosity. She did not wonder for a minute about his nationality or about the book he was reading. She was really little more aware of him—of Kiril Kuldaroff—than of the mournful cottonwood with its naked branch groping and sighing at the unwashed window.

She sat there looking at her little gloved hands, thinking of the two invitations she had received from the two sororities that had rushed her. Of Upsilon Phi she thought with haughty scorn—



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of the Kappas she thought with tentative consideration—and of Pi Omega she thought with longing and discomfiture and respect, for it had made no advances at all.

Kuldaroff was unable to go on reading his thin, blue book of Chinese poetry. He shuffled his feet and glanced up every few moments from under his shadowy lashes. To him Betty Udell must have seemed, as she did to nearly everyone, wistfully young and frail and tender. An apple blossom thing wafted lightly down from some springtime tree of innocence. . . . She looked that.

Most phases of the University life had little significance for his Slavic nature. He found the University just a place to read and converse in. His room—his meals—his appearance—he thought little of them. He was engrossed in books and music. But he was not as intent on either of these as on his own ego. Sometimes a far-away voice sounded through his dreaming and he roused from his slumbrous contemplation of himself in relation to the abstract as a sleeper might rise and seek a moonlit window. These voices and images that called him out of himself were real and yet unreal. For though they were from the actual world they were hazed over by the illusions of his own moods. He found life continually strange. People were more of phan-

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tasy to him than *Paolo and Francesca* or *Don Quixote* or *Sappho*.

But already two individuals had penetrated his deep unconsciousness: the Siamese student with whom he roomed that year and Professor Dyrcks, whose voice sang in his ears like music. Made unnaturally shy by the strange customs of an inexplicable country, Kuldaroff was in reality bold. His egotism was that of genius beginning to recognize itself. He did not doubt but that he could go to Dyrcks and make articulate many thoughts and desires and that Dyrcks would listen and find him coherent.

And now this girl. . . . He looked at her and looked at her and had no way of knowing that her soul was not as he thought—gentle and velvety as the inner surface of a flower petal.

That evening in the dingy room he shared with Thian Kit Lin, Kuldaroff sat at the window brooding at the mellow fall night. Round globules of light hung like moons in the tree-arched street. A chill reminder of Youth's conflict with Death and final capitulation, Autumn stalked down there stinging the ashen poplar leaves and the late wine-red dahlias with the poison of her frost. The tinkling of mandolins, the plaintive ukuleles, the rushing flash of speeding cars and sudden bursts of crude harmony—these were the trappings of a shadow world.





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him look at her with a gaze that was shrewd but not utterly impervious and say:

“Why, Miss Udell, I couldn’t think of allowing you to leave my class. If it gets too hard for you don’t be afraid to come up and ask any questions that trouble you.”

At the end of the semester she was one of a number of panic stricken youngsters to discover that Dyrcks had been chaffing and that he had politely passed them all with the uniform grade of “B”!

She had seen Kuldaroff three times without seeing him. She, who had learned to ask quickly on hearing a man’s name “What is he?”, meaning “To which national fraternity does he belong?”, still tabulated Kuldaroff as an “insolent foreigner”. (She confused all foreigners with missionaries, and believed that all foreign students in the State University would eventually return to their countries to preach.)

And he saw her three times a week without seeing her—except as a beautiful illusion of his own soul. But he thought that illusion was real and a growing desire for her smouldered in his heart.

For her part Betty was miserable these disturbing months. She had passed the whole semester in the degraded social position of a non-sorority girl. She was too proud to use the



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dog-eared excuse of the barb—"they asked me but I turned them down", although in her case it would have been true. She had refused the Kappas reluctantly; still she did not feel comfortable with some of them. One girl, said to possess a Phi Beta Kappa pin, had insisted that fraternities were absurd, barbarous and snobbish and had explained her own membership unblushingly on the score that she liked good food and couldn't get it elsewhere. The rest of the sisters had seemed a trifle horrified and yet afraid to silence her because she was a senior. Betty Udell thought this Cora Franck stupid and in very bad form, but went about quoting her because everyone knew her as "one of the most active girls on the campus".

It was not that kind of activity that Betty wanted. She admired inordinately the kind of game Dot Ambrose was playing—fast, loose, feverishly arresting. Betty saw her day after day—a girl slim and blonde like Betty, herself, but voluptuous and with a magnificent carriage and a coolly insinuating smile. How glorious she looked leaving a dance or a football game, leaning back in Ward Hobart's long racer, her arm carelessly along the back of his seat, her tailored suit dark and perfectly cut, her hair cleverly severe beneath her pheasant feather toque to set off in

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cameo effect her strikingly made-up cheeks and lips and eyes.

And then the shockingly daring things they put about her in the college annual and the humorous column of the students' magazine! Verses written to her dancing, about her booze parties, of the brand of cigarettes she smoked. Of course there were other girls who did the same things but none was so touted for none was so colorful as Dot Ambrose. Betty gasped, was a trifle shocked, at the picture in one annual of the Venus de Milo in which Ted Ireland, the editor, had inserted a snap shot of Dot's head. Still Betty was convinced that even this strident roast was highly complimentary to the college widow.

During the mid-semester examination she did a great deal of intensive thinking, lying on the day-bed in her room, smoking, and glancing into a mirror in the intervals of concentrated thought to wonder if she really did resemble Dot Ambrose. She still meant to "make" Pi Omega. She must! How she hated those catty high school friends who had gone into it and would apparently do nothing for her! She felt sure they had damaged her some way. Perhaps they disapproved of the street she and her mother lived on in Chicago—North Dearborn—where they still maintained an old brown front in that district of outworn

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aristocrats' mansions metamorphosed into rooming houses.

In that vacation Betty not only thought but acted. She bought a new fur coat of striking black and white civet; she persuaded her mother to let her take the neat little car back with her; and—her greatest triumph—succeeded in getting her to lease the old house and take a small apartment on Sheridan Road. "One's address does mean such a lot," mused Betty.

Just two weeks after her return to school she began to receive invitations from Pi Omega. She felt in sight of the final goal. And then arose that annoying complication of Kiril Kuldaroff.

Licensed by the fact that they had passed a semester together in class he spoke to her one day as she was coming out of the library. She answered him absently. A second time when she was with a Pi Omega getting a chocolate malted milk, Kuldaroff stepped in to buy tobacco and, seeing her, nodded and smiled, his great black eyes hypnotic. When he was gone the Pi Omega said:

"Do you know him?" curiously.

"M-m-m—" murmured Betty, flushing. "In my class once. Awful fish."

And then one cataclysmic day he overtook her when she was walking across the campus to her car and they met Dot Ambrose, herself! . . .



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He was conscious only of his own surging discoveries—already Spring had sent the world tentative messengers. He had seen a rose-breasted grosbeak, he told Betty excitedly—he had heard of them in poems but had never seen one before. He was a Russian—it was a very strange country here. He could not understand it. America had begun so gloriously with her revolution and she was failing so miserably now. Was there any hope for her? What did she mean by this ugly, mediocre standardization of everything? Ugly machinery for everything—no freedom of thought—no freedom of speech. He would like to blow America all up and see her start over.

Betty looked at him, frightened. She was certain that he was a Nihilist, whatever that was. But he was reading in her eyes an echo of the warm call he had heard from Spring that afternoon.

He returned her look boldly; again in his imagination he was attributing to her a luminous soul and a shining, white body. He was a young dreamer . . . and he thought that some day he could have her.

Betty hastily seated herself in her car. But Kuldaroff, superbly rude, leaned against the door of it. Loitering along the footpath he espied his friend, Thian Kit Lin.



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“Meet my roommate, Mr. Lin!” cried Kuldaroff joyously. Lin paused and bowed in polite confusion. The only American women he had yet met were Dean Watson, a history instructor and two badly dressed grinds. Thian Kit Lin, who was an epicure in the matter of a rhythmic line of verse and a beautiful woman, paid homage to the charming creature with his most delicate smile.

Exactly at this embarrassing point in affairs, Dot Ambrose rode by. She spoke to Betty curtly.

Betty choked and crimsoned. She felt that she could not endure this queer, long-haired fool and his Chinaman friend. She was unconscious of just how she disengaged herself and managed to drive away.

Now the worst happened. She stopped receiving invitations from Pi Omega. And Kuldaroff continued to speak to her and she, miserably, to answer him; she had pursued so long the policy of being “sweet” to everyone no matter what hard things she was thinking, that now her habit reacted on her as a boomerang. It was almost a physical impossibility for Betty Udell to snub Kuldaroff however much she hated him. She would stand listening to his mad observations about America, smiling her curling, rose-leaf smile, uneasy at first because she dreaded the cold looks of Pi Omega’s and then because she was at

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once frightened and fascinated by the way he looked at her. And once or twice it really entered her mind that there was something startling and different about him—that perhaps he was the kind of an adventurer you read about in novels, some daring, ruthless revolutionist who could disrupt whole nations with his intrigues. But, oh, he was so impossibly dressed! His dreadful hands and nervous manner!

She was even growing a little defiant over the queer turn events had taken—to her sensitive mind she was getting to be an outcast, dragged down by this persistent follower to some muggy borderland outside the neat pale set by Pi Omega.

And then Dot Ambrose took things in her hands. . . . She went to the private house where Betty stayed and went straight to her room unexpectedly one afternoon. She seated herself uninvited. Betty's heart surged with emotions—what could Dot want? She hadn't come to "bid" her at last? And there was a half conscious resentment tugging at her, too, in a way that had only occurred since she knew Kuldaroff.

They spoke of commonplaces for a moment until an expectant silence fell. "Look here, Betty," Dot began deliberately, "you're an awfully nice little girl——" she fumbled at an inlaid cigarette case and Betty saw that it contained a man's cheap, strong brand, "—you're awfully nice," Dot re-

## TOWN AND GOWN

peated murmuringly, at home now and smoking lazily, "just awfully dear and all that. Sweet. Everything." She waved her hand in a gesture that tacitly enumerated Betty's nice address and her car and civet coat as constituting the "everything" that Pi Omega demanded. "But, look here; honestly now, my dear, *what* do you see in that Kuldaroff?"

"I've never spoken more than a few words to him in my life," said Betty evenly.

"Really?" Dot gazed at her in honest surprise. "H'm'm—some story around—those fool freshmen of ours—now that's really so, is it? Never even been out with the man?"

"No! How could I? Him!" Betty was distressed.

Dot looked at her with amused, sophisticated eyes.

"I'd been sort of admiring your independence, to tell the truth. I never pay any attention to the opinions of these damned idiots around here, myself. . . . But, of course, it's different with a freshman. And non-sorority—my dear, it's hard to play a single hand in this game. To get by with the men you have to be in solid with the women first. Oh, a few girls have won out alone—take Patsy Perdue—she went to every fraternity formal on the campus and snapped her fingers in the faces of all sororities. You'd have to play a

## THE STRANGEST SERENADE

little faster than I'd like to see you, though—you're the darndest prettiest thing——” She tweaked Betty's ear in playful tenderness and Betty gazed at her with puzzled, wide, blue eyes.

She rose to go and stood at the door, swinging her vanity bag thoughtfully.

“I think if you could manage never to be seen speaking to him—maybe I could—fix things,” she said, with direct insinuation. (It wasn't form for a sorority girl to be discussing such things with a barb.)

“But how can I help it?” Betty appealed, eagerly. “He just forces me to—it's awfully hard for me to snub people.”

“Yes, it would be. Well, it would be hard for anyone to say a thing like that. Write him a note. You may use our name if you like. Blame us.”

She smiled blandly—was gone.

### V

Betty awoke at midnight on a certain night with a keen sense that the world had grown unfamiliar while she slept. She wondered if she had gone mad. Strange music was pouring in her window. She sat bolt upright, a lone little figure, straight and slim in her clinging gown. Her short hair



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lying in ringlets on her neck made her look a piquant child.

Because it was midnight and because the music was so unearthly and so near, she trembled with sudden emotion and crept fearfully to the open casement. Just below a man was playing on a violin. The moonlight bathed his face with whiteness.

Life smote Betty with a sudden sense of drama. Her breath came queerly. . . . All at once Kiril Kuldaroff stopped playing and called up to her—"Come down!" His voice was surly, imperative and hoarse.

Betty fumbled into a velvet dressing gown and slippers, unquestioning his right to command her so. There was a little darting memory in the back of her head that Dot Ambrose had not been so awfully shocked—had even "admired her independence" and had derided the ordinary women as "damned idiots". Maybe this—now—was playing the game a little faster . . . she wouldn't mind—just seeing if he really was crazy over her—just watching those luminous eyes of his in the moonlight. It was different to-night—to-night nobody could see or know. It might go on that way. On the campus they would be strangers and at nights if he came this way and played—she shivered as she slid noiselessly down the stairs.

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When she stood before him at last she felt suddenly weak and powerless and unable to face the passion in his blazing eyes. She thought dreadfully that she could not resist him if he touched her. His strange music still wailed madly in her ears.

The back yard where they stood was flooded by a pool of moonlight. Two poplars seemed straight and sinister and rustled incessantly, throwing little, quivering, black shadows on the grass. An old mop leaning against the wooden stoop looked grotesquely like a witch.

Kuldaroff began to talk in a low, choked voice. At first it was as if he spoke a foreign language and she could not understand him; and then the words gradually leaped to her straining ears with unmistakable meaning.

“—at first I thought I wanted you. But I don't now. God, no! You'd have done anything I wanted to-night. I saw it in your face when you came down. Why did you come, eh? Answer me that!” He was snarling now horribly, but she dared not move. So she stood there, trembling, her slight hands picking at the throat of her velvet gown.

“Your note! What insolence! You dared say that to *me*, to me, to me! By God, I am a strong man. I am an artist and you disgust me. Your country disgusts me. Pah, how I hate its dull

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men—its stupid morals and ideals! And its women—oh, its women! Hard, shrewd, ugly souls inside soft, beautiful bodies. . . .” He writhed in uncontrollable fury, and holding his violin carefully aside, seized her shoulder, twisted it painfully and flung her with all his might against the sharp corner of the stoop.

And he stumbled off, stumbled as if he were drunk. He must be drunk, she thought, sobbing in impotent rage and rubbing her bruised knee.

### VI

A week later Betty heard that Kiril Kuldaroff had left school. She was wearing a new Pi Omega pledge pin.

*Eleventh Episode:*

BETWEEN THE FOUR SEAS

From the Announcements of the University: "*Candidates for admission who come from foreign countries should bring complete official credentials. Certificates from Oriental and Slavic countries must be accompanied by certified translations.*"





## XI: *Between the Four Seas*

### I

**T**HIAN KIT LIN, pagan, had received an invitation to Christmas dinner. Between the long thumb and forefinger of a hand which covered his lean knee like sharp outspread petals, he held the square envelope. The invitation itself, which was printed in scroll upon heavy, creamy paper, read:

“In this, the joyous Yuletide season, the time of ‘peace on earth and goodwill to men,’ every heart in the University should be glad. To the students who have come from far climes to our University and who have no homes in this country, their fellow students and townsmen wish to extend best wishes for the traditional Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

“It is furthermore our wish that you honor this home by accepting an invitation to Christmas dinner. And when you break the bread of good fellowship with them, may you know that the hearts of all students of the State University beat

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in sympathy with you and your splendid ambitions.”

In the blank line below was written in a round hand in which the letter “e” was quite disconnected from the rest of the script, the name and address, “Mrs. James R. Elkins, 637 West Plum Street.”

The mailman who had brought the invitation could be seen two blocks down the street, as Thian Kit Lin looked through the window and slowly tapped his knee. The sidewalks that had been thronged a few days before with students passing and repassing on their way to classes now were deserted and piled high with mournful heaps of dirty snow. The dripping of snow water from the eaves into a tin tub below, a quick and monotonous beating, became in the morning stillness the ticking of some impatient clock. On the floor above, entirely vacated by students home for their vacation, every move of a listless broom across the carpet could be heard. There was, too, the heavy sound of the breathing of Kiril Kuldaroff, the roommate of Thian Kit Lin, who, after savagely tearing up his invitation, had sprawled himself across the counterpane in surly sleep.

His eyes fixed, Thian Kit Lin tapped his knee with his fantastic fingers and watched through the window the melting and dripping world without. The invitation to an American Christmas

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dinner had not come unexpectedly to Thian Kit Lin.

He had, indeed, read the first tidings of it some ten days before in the student daily newspaper. F. Blair Golden, the editor, had penned an editorial:

“Now let’s all get behind this and push—push hard. Push what? Why, the inviting of every one of our 316 foreign students to an honest-to-goodness American Christmas dinner!

“No one knows the cheer that this may bring to some lonesome student from across the water, thousands of miles from his own home and family. These fellow-students will be the one-hundred per cent Americans of the future. Now let’s all of us get together, those of us who have our homes in the city, and show our fellow students from foreign countries some real Yuletide hospitality.”

In a box heading it was announced in bold-face type that “special invitation blanks could be secured” at the student newspaper office.

Thus it was, the invitation to an American Christmas dinner came as no surprise to Thian Kit Lin, the pagan from Bangkok.

## II

By Christmas day the last traces of the snow, dirtiest of all, were melting under a hazy sun



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which dropped into the west as if weighted with blood, leaving behind it a pale stillness and a damp chill. In the dim room sat Thian Kit Lin, a translation of his poet, Li Po, enclosed by his pointed fingers and his eyes fixed on the dusk. He was already dressed for dinner.

He put on his overcoat, a loose ulster that he had bought in Paris while attending the Sorbonne for a year, silently closed the door behind him and went down the stairs. Out on the sidewalk he made his way through the early darkness with a walk which can only be described as steadfast, a gait in which his arms and shoulders played no part.

As he rang the bell at the door of 637 West Plum Street, and as a sudden porch-light shot him into urbane incandescence, he caught a glimpse of a bay window, a shadowy fern brushing it, and a pink-shaded floor lamp. Then the door was opened.

"Why, good evening, Mr.—," Mrs. James R. Elkins hesitated for a second. "—I was just sure that you were——"

"Mr. Thian Kit Lin."

"Yes, Mr. Lin. We're awfully glad that you can be with us."

Thian Kit Lin bowed. It was a bow that was slow and sweeping, a bow that was twelve centuries older than automobiles and the telegraph.

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His smile contained at once the meaningless sweetness of a child's and the hopeless senility of old age. It was—but how can a smile be at one time bold and shy, wooden and naive? But such was the smile of Thian Kit Lin.

“I am, Madam,” he said, “privileged to be your guest.”

Mrs. James R. Elkins had never been called “Madam” except by salesmen and in the form letters occasionally left in the mailbox. Not even then had the term been accompanied by such mellow suavity. His English was like his smile too perfect and it gave the impression of an accent.

“Just come right in,” she said, and opened the door wider in invitation. “That’s right; let me take your hat and things. . . . Please take this chair while I call Mr. Elkins. . . . Mr. Elkins, this is Mr. Lin, who is taking dinner with us this evening. . . . Now if you’ll excuse me I must go out for a moment and see about the table. Dinner will be ready in just a moment.”

Ten minutes later the four of them were seated about the round dining room table. At the head was James R. Elkins with poised carving knife and fork, napkin tucked in his vest, portly, ruddy of face and nearly gray of hair. On one side was Eileen Elkins, a sophomore in the State University, a plain, shell-rim-spectacled girl of twenty. On the other side, Mrs. James R. Elkins,

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majestically stiff and a bit stout in her corset and marcelled coiffure. At the foot of the table sat Thian Kit Lin, his round, smooth face shining yellow and black in the lamplight.

The gleaming tablecloth was starched and showed the creases of careful ironing. The silverware was a luxurious frosty gray and the food steamed high. About the panelled dining room, softly lit by crimson candles on the buffet, were pictures; one of a platter heaped high with fruit, another of several hundred delegates to a convention.

“The dark meat, did you say?” The voice of James R. Elkins expressed almost reverence for the roast chicken he was carving. “Yes, sir, just help yourself to the bread. . . . Now China’s always been a mighty interesting proposition to me. . . . Cranberries? . . . Well, there’s fire-crackers and a lot of things that you folks over there had a long time before we ever heard of them. . . . Now if you’ll just pass your plate up, please.”

There was a silence for a moment broken only by the clicking of the silverware on the plates. Mrs. James R. Elkins sat stiffly poised, bringing her fork up slowly and replacing it across the side of her plate. Thian Kit Lin used his fork with an ambidextrous, bird-like quickness and his head

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was, if anything, bent a trifle too low over the table.

“I think it is a splendid opportunity,” said Mrs. James R. Elkins, “that so many of your young people have a chance to attend University here. This country——”

“Let’s see,” interrupted her husband. “Oh, yes, I was reading just the other day in the Times-Gazette that there were about four hundred foreign students in the University here. A mighty good showing, it seems to me.”

“There are many of us in America to be educated,” said Thian Kit Lin, and his smile was answer to both of them.

“I was just telling Mrs. Elkins the other day that people were mistaken in thinking China was behind the times. Used to be a little, of course, but not a bit more than any other country. Look at the republic they’re starting there now. And the way their young people come over here to get an education.

“The Japs, I guess, are a different proposition. The papers talk as if they might start war on us ’most any time. And it wouldn’t surprise me if they gave us a mighty hard fight. There’s so many of them and then it’s their religion to want to die in battle. They figure that’s a sure one-way ticket to heaven.”

Mrs. James R. Elkins gave her mate a glance of



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reproval for his hearty laugh. She took up the conversation: "Our church has always helped to keep a missionary in—no, it was Korea. He writes back such interesting letters about the conditions there."

"Why, we have one of the letters, don't we, Mama?" asked Eileen.

"No, dear, don't you remember? I returned that to Mrs. Eldridge."

Thian Kit Lin did not drink his tea with his meal but took it just before his dessert in long silent sips. He finished only a third of his mince pie.

After dinner he was seated by his host and hostesses in the parlor on a large, over-stuffed rocker of leather which nearly engulfed him. James R. Elkins was in the Windsor chair, the women on the leather divan.

"Well, Hazel," said James R. Elkins, beaming complacently upon his wife, "I wonder if Mr. Lin wouldn't like to hear a little music."

James R. Elkins rose heavily, aided by his pudgy hands upon his knees, the large imitation ruby ring on one of his fingers gleaming dully under the pink-fringed shade of the floor lamp. He cranked the phonograph with little, well-fed grunts.

Thian Kit Lin appeared fragile in the huge leather rocker as he listened attentively to "The  
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Sextette from Lucia," and, on the other side of the disc record, "The Humoresque." The next piece was a zestful medley in which negro dialogue was mingled with a song describing the delights of "sunny Tennessee."

"I'm so sorry," said Mrs. James R. Elkins, "that we don't have any Chinese music. We must look for some, Eileen, the next time we get records."

"Yes, sir, wonderful thing to have in a home, a phonograph," James R. Elkins mused.

The conversation lagged for a moment, then Mrs. James R. Elkins excused herself and went to the dining room buffet to return carrying a knitting bag embroidered in beads with the bold design of a dragon. "Here's a little thing I wanted to show you, Mr. Lin. Elinore—excuse me—Mrs. Travis—that's my married daughter, you know—gave it to me. She got it up in the art department of Stearns' one day—oh, yes, it was last October. Don't you think that Chinese needle work is wonderful?"

"It is," agreed Thian Kit Lin, "skillfully done."

"You can't always tell though, sometimes," James R. Elkins laughed long and heartily. "A lot of that stuff is made right up in Chicago in factories."

"But, Papa, any one can see that this is genuine!" Eileen Elkins was earnest.

"Yes," agreed Thian Kit Lin pacifically.

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There was another long silence. Eileen Elkins saved it this time: "What studies are you taking in the University, Mr. Lin?"

Thian Kit Lin described his course in detail.

### III

It was Christmas night and the wreath of holly pinned to the scrim curtains loomed black in the pink lamplight. The smoke from James R. Elkins' cigar flowed smoothly in a thin stream toward the lamp. The steam from the radiators escaped with a comfortable hiss and the leather rockers were deep and soft. The cozy room made the blackness outside seem more black and comfortless. James R. Elkins uncrossed his fat knees and rose with a politely luxurious grunt. His wife and daughter watched him as if a ceremony pended.

"Mrs. Elkins and Eileen and I want you to take home a little souvenir of what has been a mighty pleasant evening to us, a mighty pleasant evening," he said with kindly awkwardness. "It doesn't amount to anything, but——"

Thian Kit Lin rose. He stood very still and took from James R. Elkins a package tied with green ribbon embossed in miniature Christmas trees. His pointed fingers undid the wrapping and revealed a book bound in green morocco with

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a title in gold and Old English, *The Man Who Wins*.

"It's by Alfred M. Reeves," Eileen put in.

"You read poetry, of course?" asked Mrs. James R. Elkins. "I am just sure you'll like it. I've found them so inspiring, these little things of Reeves'."

Smiling his delicate smile Thian Kit Lin opened the book at the first gilt-edged page.

"May I?" He looked up with a bird-like glance.

"Oh, do read one of them aloud."

His chant was slow and monotonous and Oriental:

Have you ever paused and wondered  
In the grayness of the gloom—  
Have you ever sat and pondered  
While the gloaming sought your room?  
Have you ever faced yourself and said:  
"This life must have a key,  
The lock will turn for someone,  
And it must be me?"

Have you ever cowered, dreaming,  
Of your past and future days,  
While the twilight glowered, gleaming,  
Starry-eyed through purple haze,  
And did inspiration whisper then  
Amid life's petty dins,  
"Here's the secret: it's the fellow  
With the smile that wins?"

O, it isn't to the heroes with their bold and shining swords;  
It isn't to the golden-tongued who sway the list'ing hordes,



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And it isn't to the captains of the lashing, crashing seas,  
Nor the adamant adventurers who storm life's frowning  
leas

That the door of life is opened  
In this world of sighs and sins—  
It's the fellow with the smile that wins!

Silently, tenderly, the exotic fingers of Thian Kit Lin replaced the book in the case and caressingly tied the package with its holiday ribbon. In the touch of those fingers and in his smile there was a deference and appreciation that made his murmured words almost unnecessary.

"I am deeply touched," said Thian Kit Lin.

James R. Elkins' eyes were blue and kindly. Eileen Elkins' smile was thrilled. And over the features of Mrs. James R. Elkins there came a look that might have been translated: "There is no Christmas in China. (At least not in those parts of China where the missionaries have not yet penetrated.) There is no holly there, no poetry, no gifts."

### IV

The front door had closed behind Thian Kit Lin. As he faced the night there was still in his ears the kindness of the parting greetings. He hurried quietly down the front porch steps, the parcel under his arm. Once he looked back at the bay window with its pink reading lamp and holly wreath and fern, then went on in his steadfast walk.

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He stopped two blocks away, only for a moment. His shining smile was gone. He was chanting in a whisper. . . . It was from Li Po.

“What is the use of talking! There is no end of talking—  
There is no end of things in the heart.”

The dampness of the paved street was already crinkled by the cold, but in the gutter was a stream of muddy water from the snows of the last week. His smile again childlike and delicate, his face dimly yellow and black in the swaying light of a street lamp, Thian Kit Lin leaned over the curb and tenderly, gently, placed his present of the evening in the turbid waters of the gutter. He stood for a moment still smiling, as he watched it float away into the darkness.



*Twelfth Episode:*

A BLIND DATE, COUSIN LOTTIE  
AND THE CAT

From the Descriptive Booklet of the University: *“The various women’s associations have for their object the promotion of solidarity among the women by uniting them for social purposes and by providing for their needs in any possible way.”*





## XII: *A Blind Date, Cousin Lottie and the Cat*

### I

**T**HE piano stopped with an abrupt chord. Eleven girls flopped excitedly into eleven chairs. The twelfth girl who had seized on no chair was, by the rules of the game, "out". She stood aloof and listened to the others cry,

"Why, Ellen Pritchett! You didn't try to get a chair! Now, honestly, did you?"

Ellen Pritchett's smile was cool and poised. She was thinking that the eleven were near-ugly and stupid. She was thinking that musical chair was silly. But there was nothing in her manner to indicate her thoughts. In obedience to the game she moved to the Christmas tree, chose a package from the branches, unwrapped it calmly and looked at it. It was a folding needle case made neatly of blue-flowered ribbon and tied with pink bows.

"Oh, it's sweet!"

"Perfectly darling!"

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“Who made it?”

“Awfully handy to slip into your pocket.”

“Mend your stockings at gym with it.”

Ellen Pritchett smiled and thanked the party as a whole. The donor was supposed to be unknown; but she had seen Iva Weirs making the needle case months ago. She had smiled then at Iva for taking such an eager interest in the Christmas party of Halcyon House as to prepare a gift so painstakingly soon. Only that afternoon Ellen Pritchett had bought a vanity box to put on the tree, paying seventy-five cents for it, indifferent to the rules of the house that no present must exceed a quarter.

She put the needle case in a corner of the window sill. She hated “handy” things, especially if they were fashioned neatly from blue and pink flowered ribbon. Neither did she care to “mend her stockings at gym with it,” for when her stockings had holes she threw them away. She always kept three new pairs of silk stockings in her locker at the gymnasium for emergencies.

She sat lazily in a mission rocker and listened to the eleven gurgle the ecstasies she designated “raving on”. The queer part, she thought, was that they should be sincerely enthusiastic. How could they be? It was her fourth Christmas at Halcyon House. Thank Heaven it was her last! Each December twenty-third (before the most of

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them left for Christmas vacation) she had bought a present and put it on the tree, receiving in return something another girl had bought and put on the tree. Each twenty-third of December she had played musical chair to determine in what order the packages were distributed. There had been talk at business meeting of doing it some other way, but in the end they played musical chair. She had known they would.

At business meeting she sat quietly in the background and listened to the grave discussions about "getting Rita McLaughlin interested again"; as to the flowers to be sent to Rev. Dunlevy who was ill—"bright red carnations to cheer him up, girls, don't you think?"; about raising money with a little bazaar to buy new drapes; about whether the girls ought to dance with each other Sunday afternoons since Halcyon House was so closely connected with the Y. W. C. A.; and once there had been an ominous commentary by the president on the fact that Miss Ellen Pritchett had been seen smoking. "Something really nice girls don't do. I suppose the man you were with influenced you unduly, but don't you think it would be more womanly to try and influence him not to smoke?"

Where Ellen Pritchett came from they did not talk about being womanly. She and her sisters were concerned with being pretty and amusing



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men; in order to amuse men you had to smoke and drink and wear good clothes. In her Southern home there were jolly colored maids who kept her neat and by flattering remarks furthered her idea that her mission was to be charming and happily indolent. This northern State University had been recommended to her by a friend who had married extremely well.

“My *dear*—the men! Thousands of men! Every girl up there has *four and a half men*, so to speak.”

Ellen had persisted through nearly four years of it, studying household science negligently. To ambitious girls who had “aims”, she said she was going to teach household science, or home economics, as it was phrased still more euphemistically. But she intended to do nothing of the sort—not if she could find the right man.

To her the four years had brought failure. She had started out all wrong by accepting the invitation of Halcyon House. She had had no influential friends in the school. “No drag,” she told herself. The girl she had known who married well had not belonged to a sorority. Ellen had thought to improve on this girl’s career by joining something. The club had only proved a hindrance. It was impossible to live it down. At every turn she found herself labelled “one of those Halcyon girls” with slurring emphasis.

## A BLIND DATE

She bolstered her pride by considering how pathetic the others of her house really were. She felt sorry for any girl who could actually enjoy herself without men. She kept analyzing them—trying to discover how they could gasp with pleasure over these Christmas gifts which came from each other. Her conviction was that no present should be gasped over unless a man had presented it.

As she sat watching now, her observations flashed like shuttlecocks and her caustic criticism was a dangerous, feline-swift battledore:

There they are, the dowdy lot of them, getting excited over an asinine game like musical chair; the peppy ones swaying back and forth with their arms about each other, talking loudly about such inane things as the lights on the tree, whether there will be enough snow for the big bob-sled party to-morrow night, and of the sweetness of the Dean of Women—they all admire Dean Agnes Watson *so* much!

There is Lucretia Cook, plump and good-natured like a fat, familiar notebook in which irrelevant jottings are scribbled. She never can coordinate her thoughts—tells jokes which have no bearing on the subject in hand, jokes that become really funny when colored by the deep purple of her laughter. Her laughter is like purple ink slobbering down a page. Even the crudeness of

## TOWN AND GOWN

her humor, its occasional cunning salaciousness, cannot stamp her as anything but a nice girl. Yes, they are all nice girls!

And Peggy Fry! She's found it a tenacious struggle to make the girls call her Peggy. Wide-mouthed, raw-boned, with prominent teeth, she looks anything but Peggy. She has a talent for appearing dowdy in the best materials and the latest cuts. Failing in her ambition to be cute and chic, she had become one of the most indefatigable workers in the First Presbyterian church. Suspicious of sorority girls, town girls, and pretty women instructors.

Irene Schultz wears the flag of her patience in a tatted collar and cuff set of infinitesimal loopings. She worked on it for long months and now wears it with an air of meek pride. Usually silent, she gives the impression that she's quietly criticizing, summing up, pigeonholing people. Perhaps she is! Her conclusions can't be interesting or they would lend some luster to her pale eyes.

Elsie Brecht! She approaches prettiness so apologetically that it mocks her. Her large, noble brown eyes have the expression of a bossy cow. So tranquil she ought to chew a cud. . . .

Ellen moistened her lovely lips with a catlike sensuality. At a party like this she derived no enjoyment until it was possible for her to sit

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apart and lap up her thoughts. At such a time she knew she appeared charming, bright-eyed and gracefully postured. Often the other girls paused to watch her, feeling her an ornament to their vanity, one little frivolous gem in the lusterless ring known as Halcyon.

Even now she overheard Elsie saying to Irene, wistfully envious, "Where did *she* get that big shell comb? It makes her look Spanish—or—something."

If they bought combs Ellen would discard hers, snatch away the precedent and leave them with imitations they were too timid to wear.

She regretted that the measure of her pride was on so small a scale. One's pride varied according to one's adversaries and these were small—very small. She longed to cross swords with girls formidable. Dot Ambrose, Patsy Perdue—there were girls with tall pride proportioned to their slashing subjection of the feminine populace. After all, men were only the gloves with which one slapped the faces of girls. It was women one duelled. She had known women to marry merely as a rapier thrust to a feminine enemy.

### II

The girls began to sing Christmas carols. They opened their mouths very wide as they sang and their eyes roved about genially. Ellen did not mind



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the carols. They were rather nice if you could ignore Lucretia Cook's robust alto and Peggy's high squeaky accompaniment she called tenor; but when they began old hymns Ellen went up to her room.

There she found Iva Weirs, her roommate, neatly copying lecture notes for heredity and evolution.

Ellen kicked off her slippers—she was consistently untidy—dropped her high comb on the bookcase, stepped out of her black crêpe dress and stood in her chemise, arms at her sides, gazing at the silk-shaded boudoir lamps on either side of the mirror. Yes, they were awfully nice, those orange and cream lace shades. And the room was nice, too.

Her hobby was interior decorating. With orange and black enamel she had transformed a study table and two chairs into smooth, gleaming surfaces that invited the eye after the monotony of the dark brown wall and floor. The couch had the soft luxury of many pillows; at the old-fashioned, shuttered windows hung bright patterned orange and black cretonnes. On a little table her gray-shining pewter tea service, her copper chafing dish; and in a low, dull green bowl, a family of narcissus lifting white, fragrant faces.

"The only decent room in the house," she said.

"What?" Iva looked up, stared anxiously at  
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Ellen's lavender chemise, then at the window. "Hadn't you better pull down the blinds? . . . Wait, I will." She put down her notes and lowered the shades, peering with near-sighted eyes through her round, bone-rimmed glasses.

"Gosh," remarked Ellen, softly, "gosh." She was musing on Iva's conviction that people would deviate on their way back from the Orpheum this cold winter night to station themselves under a back, third floor window and ogle an ordinary lavender chemise. "My knees would sure be worth it," she said, impudently, looking down with satisfaction at the dimpled roundnesses above her rolled stockings. She pulled out a box of violet scented cigarettes from the little table and lit one.

Iva looked up again, staring still more anxiously, although she essayed no remonstrance. Neither would she dare speak to the other girls.

The room glimmered black and orange through a delicate haze of smoke. Yes, it was awfully nice—except for Iva humping awkwardly over the table. The two sharp points of her shoulders reared themselves abjectly under her sheer georgette waist. A mode, thought Ellen, that she persists in wearing, like all thin girls.

Ellen intended to bring Jimmy Tradinick up to this room to-morrow night. The other girls were going on a bob-sled party. Miss Spink, the house chaperon, would be with them. Already

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Ellen had told Jimmy to arrange a blind date for Iva Weirs—Iva, the skinny and bespectacled—Iva, who would not even go on a bob-sled party, who never went out with men!

“Just think, Iva,” said Ellen in the companionable tone that never failed to delude her roommate, “just think—we’re seniors! We’re nearly through! The old classes, the old library, old Sterling Hall! We’ll never see them again! We’ll be gone!”

Moisture always came to Iva’s near-sighted eyes when she heard the word “old” prefixed many times to names of campus buildings and spoken with that hidden sob Ellen was putting into her voice now. The hint of any regret, the thought of leaving anything or anybody brought her sad tremors and facile tears.

She was what Ellen called “an emotional slop.”

Iva’s eyes grew moist at movies about old homesteads and young mothers; at renditions of “Jes’ A-wearyin’ For You” and “Your Eyes”; but she read “Dover Beach” without blinking and made scholarly reports to her English instructor on Arnold’s use of vowel sounds.

After leaving college she would subscribe to the alumni magazine, out of what she earned teaching Psychology she would pay to read that Walter Branty and Myra Hichens Branty, who had been in one of her classes, were now the

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parents of a seven-pound man child. She would spend still more time and money to "come back"; to watch other people's commencement exercises, and thrill vicariously at the sight of caps and gowns; to stand on the campus where large numerals marked the reunion of her class, and wonder pathetically why none of her acquaintances had thought to stand there too; to attend old grad luncheons at which nobody knew her, meekly eating the familiar chicken-in-patties and creamed peas for which she paid \$1.25; to sit in the auditorium listening to a renowned pig-iron manufacturer from Pittsburgh describe the advantages of a college education, and when he was successfully through to rise and sing four stanzas of "Thy Sons Return Dear Alma Mater, Loyally to Thee". . . .

"The dear old paths!" said Ellen in a melancholy voice, "the old bench by the acacia tree! The moon rising over dear old Halcyon House! The Christmas tree to-night—our last."

From below came the sound of many female voices wailing hymns.

"Don't," said Iva, weakly. She stopped making a diagram to show the transmission of evil characters in the deplorable Jukes family. Her head drooped gloomily into her hands.

"Don't you have any regrets, Iva, now that it's



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over? Don't you often wish you'd stepped out more?"

"Stepped out?"

"Yeh, with men. You've only one more semester, Iva. Just one more chance to be young and gay. To play, you know. I read somewhere that we live by four things: work, love, play, worship. Say, Iva, don't you ever think you've sorta neglected the *play* element?" Ellen sat on the bed and smoked meditatively.

"Ye-es, maybe I have. But—Ellen—I've never really had a chance." Iva was very honest. Her eyes looked wistful through their round glasses.

Ellen was suddenly sorry for her. She was tremendously glad she had talked to Jimmy Tradinick about the blind date. "Get her a nice boy," she had said. "Somebody that says 'pardon me' a lot, one of those clean-cut young Americans—you know. Somebody that dances the two-step, uses your last name, goes to class parties and eats at the Y. M. C. A. cafeteria." Ellen was pleased with herself, now, for her altruism.

"Listen, Iva, I know how it is. You pull down such *darn* good grades—Phi Beta Kappa in your junior year—and all that. But I got to thinking and I decided you *ought to step out*. So—don't get scared, honey,—I got you a date."

Iva had started to trace the Jukes' disgraceful paths once more, through matricide, arson and

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rape, but now her pen made a blot where she had meant to put great-great grandfather Jukes. "You got *me* a date?" she said. Then—"You got me a *date*? Who with——?" (It amused Ellen to find Iva dropping into the vernacular.)

"Oh, with a peach of a fellow," said Ellen, growing highly imaginative. "He belongs to the Y. M. C. A. I think he's the vice-president or maybe the secretary—anyway, he is perfectly grand and awfully good looking. He saw you at Epworth League last Sunday. . . . He asked Jimmy Tradinick to ask me to introduce him."

Iva carefully blotted the place where she had meant to put great-great grandfather Jukes. But she did not draw the little circle that was supposed to be he. She remained transfixed, blotter in hand. Her face was very red.

"What's—what's his name?" she asked.

Ellen saw that more data was required. "Just a minute," she said. Slipping into a dressing gown she went down to the second floor telephone. She returned triumphantly from her conversation with Jimmy. "I know you'll like him, Iva—though I can't hand blind dates much as a rule. His name is Bertram Hall and he plays the cornet in the first band and he lives at the Ag Club. He's coming to take you to a banquet his Sunday School class is giving. And you can wear

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my fur coat if you want to and your silk dress will look slick if you press it."

"Oh, I don't think I'd better," said Iva, nervously.

"Better what?"

"Better go. I have all my notes to copy——" Iva looked ruefully at the Jukes' arrested pathway.

"Rot! Do it to-morrow. 'Sides, he's *coming* and you'd have to call him up at the Ag Club and sling the devil of a line to get out of it now. . . . Do come on to bed—I'm ungodly sleepy."

In her pajamas, Ellen looked a guileless child. She lay in the dark at last, thinking about Jimmy Tradinick (accent on the "din," he was careful to insist): he was dissolute, not the marrying kind, a lounge lizard, a politician. Lank, suave, he smiled at everything and everybody. His cynical humor refused to let you believe in your best friend. He thought the university, his fraternity brothers, his relatives and most women inexpressibly stupid. He called prominent men like Pewter Hughes and Andy Protheroe asses and jellybeans. He had travelled, he had money, he was bored. He often wondered why he had committed the supreme idiocy of coming here to college.

He knew Ellen hated the smug sound of "Halcyon House" and he continually annoyed her with the subject. "Don't worry," he had said. "If I  
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tell anyone *I'm* going to see a girl at Halcyon House they immediately conclude its an immoral place." He piqued her by looking amused at the mission chairs and slippery leather couch in the living room. She wanted him to see her room—to know that she was accustomed to different surroundings. He would find her a different Ellen—up there. . . . "That darn parlor—cramps my style——" she thought as she went to sleep.

The next afternoon she met Jimmy downtown for a matinée at the Orpheum. After the Orph they went to the Pearson Hotel for dinner. (The dining room of the Pearson Hotel was frequented by the more affluent students.) In the pale blue and gold dining room she nodded to several acquaintances, brightly, proudly. . . . By this time the Halcyon House girls had all ridden noisily away in the ridiculous bob-sled. In half an hour, Iva, who had sternly copied notes all day, would be stepping forth with the unimpeachable Mr. Hall to a Sunday School banquet.

It would not be long until Ellen sat with Jimmy Tradinick in the orange-tinted cosiness of her room—Jimmy Tradinick who had laughed at her for being "conventional". . . . "If you had just the necessary touch of madness about you I might fall in love," he had said carelessly. They would make cocktails and they would smoke; they



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would see each other alone, at last, in a setting charming and intimate——

### III

“Ready?”

He was handing a bill to the waiter. . . . She was enveloped in her loose semi-evening cloak of deep blue velvet and pale lemon-colored fur. She wore a new spring hat—a poke bonnet with a silver facing and a curious feather trailing careless fronds.

In honor of this hat Jimmy hailed a taxicab. It was a very wobbly cab but a cab nevertheless. She thought pleasurably that she had been in almost all of the cabs that ever stopped at Halcyon House.

. . . Now they were in the darkness of the hall, brushing the snow from each other. Jimmy Tradinick, nonchalant and tacitly amused, lit a cigarette and waited.

“I’ll have to see,” she said, and her breath caught a little. “I’ll go up and see if——”

“Kiss Jimmy ’bye, naughty little sweetheart,” was all he said. She obediently stood on tiptoe to kiss him and for a moment there was only darkness and heartbeats and whispers.

At last she sped up to her room.

A light! . . . Iva Weirs sitting there, sewing.  
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Iva Weirs in her old gray bathrobe, patiently stitching a blue-flowered needle case.

“Why—you—why—didn’t you *go*? Didn’t he come?”

“I called him up and explained like you said,” answered Iva placidly.

“But why? Why?”

“Because of Cousin Lottie.”

“Is she dead?” asked Ellen. She hoped Cousin Lottie was at least dead.

“Oh, no! Not dead. But you see I remembered I hadn’t made her a Christmas present. Nothing! Not a thing! And I remembered mama hadn’t either. She lives way out in California, you know, and you can’t depend on the mails the last thing, of course. It was just terribly forgetful of me! So I’m making her one of those pretty little needle cases like I made you. If I dress and go out to mail it to-night, it’ll go first thing in the morning, won’t it?” she appealed anxiously.

“Yes,” said Ellen, “I suppose it will.”

She looked at the little teatable—its shining glasses, its copper kettle, the unopened cigarettes, the narcissus flowers—with quickly winking eyes.

“And you don’t know,” continued Iva with a plaintive, virtuous air, “How very *much* I wished to meet Mr. Hall. I have a second cousin named

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Hall out in Davenport, Iowa, and I wanted to ask——”

But Ellen had disappeared.

Jimmy Tradinick sat for half an hour in the reception parlor of Halcyon House. Jimmy was sensitive to atmosphere. He began to feel numb—the couch was very hard. . . . It was snowing outside. Inside there was no grate fire and the photographs of innumerable Halcyon alumnæ glared at him inimicably. Yawning, he made his excuses and walked over to the nearest billiard hall for a game of pool.

*Thirteenth Episode:*

WHEN GREEK MEETS BARB

From the Descriptive Booklet of the University: "*Most of the national social fraternities have chapters at the University.*"





## XIII: *When Greek Meets Barb*

### I

**T**HE State University was giving a reception on the last evening of registration. Placards announced the fact on the bulletin boards of every hall of the campus. In addition, Andrews had received a mimeographed invitation, mailed to him at the rooming house that had been his home for nearly a week.

Both Andrews and Larsen, his roommate, were going. Nor was their zeal in dressing for the occasion quelled when the sophomore in the room across the hall spurned the subject with the comment: "Same old stuff! Mr. and Mrs. Prexy always do that every year."

It was the rushing season when the Greek letter organizations were competing with each other to choose out of the thousand and a half incoming freshmen those few hundred who would do most honor to their pin in the way of fussing, athletics, politics and spending. So was Fraternity Row a blurb of lights and laughter as Andrews and Lar-

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sen went past on the way to the campus. Dizzying cars roared by on the uneven pavement. Grouped forms were on the broad brick porches, talking and arguing vehemently. From across the street there came shrillness and clatter of feminine heels—the sororities were rushing, too.

Andrews looked on eagerly. He felt suddenly taut with hope. Far back in his high school days of the year before, he had seen fraternity life in the picture offered by a score of University catalogues and descriptive booklets; the comradeship, the dancing and dates, the prestige. To be able to wear with the proper nonchalance that tiny jeweled pin! To write letters home on the rich, cream-colored stationery embossed with Greek letters that would mystify the entire twelve hundred inhabitants of Newona! To speak languidly of “my fraternity brothers!”

There were these obstacles, of course: Andrews had little more than enough money for his actual expenses. He had not that entrée of acquaintance with someone from his high school who was already wearing a pin. He had neither athletic nor social importance.

But Andrews had been, well, if he did say so himself, about as popular a man as there was in his high school; the only one, in fact, who had ever gone steady with Esther Buckendahl.

There was, however, another drawback—Lar-  
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sen. Larsen was impossible. Andrews had shared the room with him because he knew no one else and because Larsen, whom he had met during registration, was also unable to afford a room alone. But Larsen—his humble, doglike eyes, his two hundred pounds of very blonde awkwardness, his lumpy speech—yes, Larsen was out of the question as soon as he could find another roommate.

Andrews was slender enough to wear to advantage the slim, straight-line clothes advertised in full pages of the magazines; his hair, parted cleanly in the middle and brushed straight back, added no jarring note to his sharp, dapper features; he was suave; he had always “got over.”

The two of them, with Larsen a step to the rear, arrived at the large reception hall on the second floor of the Library Building a bit early. There were, however, literally hundreds—for the most part very obviously freshmen—already there, standing about in awkward groups or examining the statuary with forced interest. The great room was nervously alive with all pitches of conversation.

A committee of juniors and seniors, impatient to get to their fraternity dances, met the two at the door. Without warning, a sleek youth with a tiny moustache was shaking Andrews' hand.

“Glad to see you, old man. Protheroe's my



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name. Very glad to know you, I'm sure. Here, just let me tie this card to your button. Thanks. Yes, write your name on it. Here's a pencil. Sure, such a mob here, you know, good chance to get acquainted. First year man, aren't you? So long, old man. See you again. Thanks."

Andrews was irritated with himself for having been a bit awed and awkward. He envied Protheroe both his line of talk and the pin on his vest. And he wished that Larsen wouldn't keep at his heels so doggedly and so wide-eyed with confusion.

The group toward which they had been moving suddenly engulfed them. Introductions came at them blindingly. Every one was reading the name on every one else's card.

"Mr. Andrews? Spelton's my name. Kind of badly written on the card, I guess. From Columbia. Where from—Newona, did you say? No, don't know anybody there. Well—very glad to have met you, Mr. Andrews. Hope to see you again some time. Thanks, same to you."

"Glad to know you, I'm sure, Mr. Andrews. Thanks. Sure a crowd, isn't it? I'm glad to have met you, too. See you again."

It was breathless, giddy. Within a few minutes Andrews had met a dozen freshmen, none of whom knew each other and each of whom went on and on almost helplessly, reading the names

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on the cards tied to each person's button and going through the same formula of introduction. Once, Andrews stopped to talk to a girl to whom he had introduced himself, but the conversation was broken up so many times by proffered introductions that he gave it up. And then——

“Oh, how do you do, Mr. Andrews? Thank you. Quite fascinating, isn't it? Now please do make yourself at home, as Father used to say at Sunday dinner; just introduce yourself all around. Yes, splendid chance to meet everybody. Thanks, awfully.”

She was gone, leaving Andrews almost too dazed to acknowledge properly the blurted introduction of a huge, gangling freshman. She was his ideal of the co-ed, a new sort of languid, sophisticated girl; hair brushed back severely from a straight part, a plain black gown unembellished by anything but a jewelled sorority pin and a card proclaiming that she was one of the Freshmen Entertainment Committee. The scrawled name on the card was “D. Ambrose.”

Nothing coquettish, kittenish about her; she was all straightforward, nonchalantly bold, uncaring, sophisticated. She was of another world, the world to which he aspired, the world of pledge buttons, of slow, grotesque dances under parchment-shaded lamps, of easy, bored conversation, of knowing kisses. Andrews resolved to date up

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with D. Ambrose. He had seen none to compare with her on the campus. But he wished that she hadn't noticed and introduced herself to Larsen, who was still—pluckily—at his heels. Oh, well, some day he, with an acquired sophistication that would match hers, might joke with her about the whole thing.

There was another hour of introductions and then a youth with a megaphone—the one who had met Andrews at the door—shouted dexterously for silence. The crowd faced the platform. The chairman announced that President and Mrs. McLaren were, unfortunately, in Europe at the time. He had, however, received a cablegram from them that was a message of welcome to the splendid body of young people who would make up the freshman class of the year and who would be the sophomores and juniors and seniors of the future. With their permission he would read the cablegram. After which, he wished to introduce Executive Dean Abrams, who had a few words to say.

Andrews was mildly interested in the appearance of the executive dean. He had read an article in a popular magazine of the summer before, which had captioned Dean Abrams as “the Big Brother of the State University.”

After the orchestra played “Thy Sons Return, Dear Alma Mater,” there were the wafers and  
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punch, but Andrews was ready to go back to his room. He had met D. Ambrose and that was enough. He saw clearly now that the rest of the reception deserved all the disdain the sophomore had put into his comment earlier in the evening. It was merely for freshmen and barbs and hicks.

He dodged several more introductions and sauntered out of the door congratulating himself upon his first escape that evening from Larsen. But when he reached the street off the campus and was well into Fraternity Row a wave of longing amounting to a sudden tightness of the throat came over him and threatened to overwhelm his new nonchalance. He could see under the half-drawn shades in the houses on every side the activity of the world to which he aspired—that blasé, correct laughter; the dancing of just the proper grotesqueness; the sarcastic gayety; the whispering couples in the shadows of the big, opulent porches. And he was out of it all. He was a damned barb.

### II

By the end of his freshman year Andrews was still a barb. He was still rooming with Larsen, who donned an apron for three hours a day in an uptown restaurant frequented by clerks and street car employes, and embarrassedly bawled



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short orders through a tile-framed window to earn his meals. Andrews did not work. He had found that the monthly check he received from home was enough to cover his expenses neatly and allow him an occasional date.

It was all a matter of acquaintance, he told himself. He had known no one of importance when he entered the university. It was different now.

For he had seen during the year the claiming by fraternities of five out of the sixteen men in the rooming house at which he and Larsen stayed. There was Cub Rogers, a perfect ass, of course; but then his father owned sixteen hundred acres of good corn land down in Allen County. And Meerbaum . . . well, Meerbaum was a pretty good fusser. Had a little money, too. But—Sydell? Why Sydell?

One by one they left the rooming house, later to reappear occasionally for short chats (superciliously wearing their pledge buttons). But all of them would be sophomores in their fraternities next fall——

Andrews made sure that he kept up his acquaintance with them.

The hulking Larsen was almost speechless in the presence of his dapper roommate. The more Andrews bullied him the more he seemed to reverence Andrews.

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“Swede, you’re a greasy grind,” Andrews would tell him pityingly. “Why don’t you shake a leg once in a while?”

“Ye-es,” Larsen would ponder it, his blue eyes wide with admiration. “Well—maybe I will.”

But he never did. He stayed up in the room and studied on the evenings when Andrews went out on dates with the girls from the next door rooming house.

Andrews somehow liked the big fellow. But Larsen was “impossible” and there was no dodging that fact.

### III

A good fraternity and passing grades were only two of Andrews’ objectives in the State University. A date with Dot Ambrose, the “D. Ambrose” of the freshman reception, was the third objective. He felt, however, that this date, like the fraternity pledge, must be postponed until his sophomore year.

What chance had a mere barb freshman with the one and only Dot Ambrose? Dot Ambrose, the blasé and immaculately careless and gliding, who had been in the State University nobody knew how many semesters and who, through conditions and failures in her subjects, would be there nobody knew how many more semesters! She who successfully staked her femininity against all the

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traditions and regulations of the University, always technically virtuous and always shocking.

Andrews had met her again during the second mid-semester examinations! Dot Ambrose was taking freshman rhetoric over for the—how many times was it? She had been assigned to Andrews' section for the test.

He had no hope, when she took the chair beside him, that she would recognize him from the freshman reception. Not Dot Ambrose! He hoped, indeed, that she wouldn't.

Dot smiled her weary smile. She waited languidly until the instructor had turned to the blackboard, then whispered to Andrews:

"My God! I mustn't flunk this Rhet again. Lend a hand, won't you?"

At the end of the examination her answers, although differing in diction, were just as correct as Andrews'. He admired the cool, practiced way in which she copied them. In comparison to her the others of the class whom he saw cribbing were timid and erring dilettanti.

"Thanks, awfully," she whispered to him at the end of the examination. "I do hope you were right or I may have to take Rhet One all over again."

Both papers received an "A." But Andrews realized that helping Dot Ambrose to crib in examinations was not a stepping stone to a date with  
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her. He must have the significance of a fraternity pin.

### IV

He came back for his sophomore year with definite hopes. During the summer he had by chance met Cub Rogers, who had roomed at the house with him before pledging Alph.

"I want to have you up to the house for dinner some night after we all get back," the Cub had said carelessly as they parted.

And Andrews had convinced his parents that his increased expenses as a sophomore would demand a larger monthly check. He would have enough now to take care of the situation nicely. His wardrobe, too, upon which he had spent his summer's earnings, was the best that he had ever owned. He had decided positively that he would room no more with Larsen.

Such preparations and anticipations contributed all the more to Andrews' inward bitterness when rushing week passed without his having been approached by even the most minor of fraternities. The situation not only embittered but also puzzled him. Even in his most retrospective and searching moments he knew that he was a more logical prospect for a brotherhood than many of the freshmen he had seen with pledge buttons.



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“Why don’t some one with political ability organize the big majority?” he sometimes asked himself. Yes, the big majority, out of everything, and allowed only that which the organized minority saw fit to allow! But some fraternity would have taken in that genius of organization long before he became that dangerous—and the genius would have accepted. For in his own mind every barb was potentially a Greek.

It was: “What is he?” “Oh, he’s a Deke.”

Or: “How does he rate?” “Why, don’t you know? He’s a Phi Gam.”

That was it everywhere you went, in or out of the University. If you couldn’t answer in Greek you were nobody. Your name was mud.

He hated the fraternities. He disliked the barbs as a class even worse. For he could but agree that the brotherhoods had on the whole chosen well. They had taken the most and the best of the spenders, the athletes, the politicians and the fussers. They had taught them to use a salad fork and wear a Tuxedo. The barbs were a sorry lot. They meekly took what was left them and patiently waited their turn for more. Most of them were as smug and as snobbish as the Greeks and were not nearly so graceful about it.

But why had *he* been left out of everything?

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## V

By the time Andrews was a junior he was resigned to a non-fraternity social life. For it was almost too late in his University life for a request to come from one of the better fraternities.

It was true, of course, that he had been approached once by one of the very minor locals. Andrews himself put an end to the negotiations. For he had seen even the bulky Larsen, his former roommate, decorated with the pledge button of one of the most national of national brotherhoods.

Some coach had eyed the tremendous Larsen one day and had wondered as to his athletic possibilities. He had tried him out in the weight events and had almost gasped to watch him pick up the hammer as if it were a marble, whirl it about his great blonde head with clumsy ease and hurl it a distance that was absolutely impossible. From that moment Larsen was a prize. The coach dug up a track suit appropriate to his Viking limbs and had him out at practice every day. Larsen was to break all of the conference records before he was through.

He was "rushed" almost immediately by two fraternities and in his embarrassment at the confusing arguments he promised both of them. A volcanic dispute between the two houses ensued before Larsen's blue serge suit was finally en-

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hanced by the proper pledge button. His brothers gave him a rough course of tutoring in table manners and dancing and then launched him into society.

The result was violent and unexpected. Dot Ambrose, avowedly "sick of slickers and parlor snakes," took up Larsen almost vehemently. For a month the two were seen at dances or at the Orph together while the University marvelled at her patience with his massive dancing and continual expression of anxiety. As suddenly as she had first cultivated Larsen, Dot dropped him to take up with one of the young radicals.

Andrews met Larsen on the way to a class one day. Larsen was positively grateful to see him, as he had been ever since they had left off rooming together. He almost crushed Andrews' hand.

"I just thought of it last night!" he blurted with heavy candor. "You are not in a fraternity. That seems damn funny. I want to get you in mine."

Andrews snarled, suddenly twisted and impotent and ratlike in rage. "You big bastard! Shut up and forget it."

He turned and left Larsen motionless, gaping.

### VI

During his last two years at the State University Andrews studied harder than ever. He even  
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wondered sometimes if he were not reputed to be a grind.

“Well, wait till they get out and up against the real thing,” he consoled himself almost vengefully. “They can’t always get by on drag and papa’s money.”

He read even more faithfully than ever the articles in his favorite magazine—“How I Sold My Hardest Prospect”—“The Life Story Of A Crippled Youth Who Became A Millionaire Retailer”—“Success Isn’t A Matter Of Chance, Says Hardwick.”

When he went to the Orph on Saturday evenings it was as often with one or two of the men of the rooming house as with a girl. He danced seldom. His studies had become his greatest ambition and he even made no secret of the high grades he received.

He knew now that there were other good men in the University who had been passed up by the fraternities and who had become prominent senior barbs. For example, F. Blair Golden, editor of the student daily newspaper. No, a fraternity wasn’t everything. It was study that counted.

The fraternity ambition was easier to relinquish than the hope of a date with Dot Ambrose. In the room it was not hard to tell himself that she was a faker, a university vamp and a know-nothing; but if by chance he met her on the cam-



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pus, her bold eyes, her husky voice and striking gowns always brought back to him like homesickness the memory of that freshman reception and his resolution then that he would some time rush her.

Once he did ask her for a date. He had been introduced to her during practice for amateur theatricals. She had acknowledged the introduction as if she had never seen him before.

“Remember that freshman rhet exam?” he asked almost bluntly, for her oversight irritated him.

“Can’t say I do,” she drawled in her straightforward, supercilious way. “I’ve flunked so many examinations around here that I’ve forgotten half of them—”

“Say, Dot, when were you ever a freshman?” another girl put in. (There was no doubt of it; Dot was losing supremacy.)

Later, when Andrews asked her for a date, she grew suddenly confidential.

“Awfully sorry, but you know, I just can’t do it.” She raised her cool white hand to exhibit a diamond ring set in platinum. “I’m engaged again. Graduating this spring, you know. Chicago man and he’s awfully jealous about such things.”

Andrews was inwardly furious and could hardly conceal it as he turned away with a “Sure,  
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I see," and what he hoped would pass as an understanding smile. He knew that Dot Ambrose, engagement ring and all, would be seen at a dance with a fraternity man that evening.

It gave him no little pleasure to learn that Larsen, holder of the conference hammer throw record, would not be able to graduate with him in the spring. Larsen had become so bewildered with his social and athletic triumphs that he had flunked several of his senior subjects and would have to put in another semester to get his degree from the College of Agriculture.

### VII

By Commencement time all except the seniors and a few of the post graduates had gone home. The summer session had not yet begun and the campus was sad in its desertion. The June sunlight, gay with hope, seemed cruel in shining on the silent streets and brooding trees and the campus buildings so indifferent to each other in color, age and architecture.

Andrews paid no attention to Class Day. It wasn't compulsory. Few cared about hearing the nervous class poet and seeing the always unknown valedictorian. Andrews put in several hours waiting in line to rent the cap and gown that he

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had ordered weeks before from a campus clothing store.

The next two days of Commencement included the president's reception to the seniors, the band concert and the senior ball. He went to none of them. Instead, he wrote some letters to Chicago firms in answer to the want-ads of positions in the Sunday newspaper and, when he found time monotonous up in the room, went to matinées at the Orph. He was worried everywhere by the vague feeling that he had forgotten something, only to remember with a start that it was his classes and studies that he was missing.

On the morning of Commencement Day he tried on for the first time his cap and gown, smiling sardonically at his appearance in the mirror. He sat down on the edge of the brass bed and smoked a cigarette as he waited for ten o'clock to come.

His classmates were already on the campus. The khaki-clad officers of military drill were lining them up in the order of march. Andrews, as an honor student, was placed near the head of the column in the Engineering group. He knew none of the men about him.

After an interminable period of waiting—the caps and gowns were uncomfortably warm in the June sun—the march to the auditorium started. Out in the street a teamster was gaping

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—at him, Andrews thought. Two or three small boys stopped excitedly on the sidewalk to watch. Everyone was out of step.

After some confusion the seniors were seated in the first rows of seats in the auditorium. The rest of the huge hall was packed with tired, hot mothers and fathers—the dentists and merchants and druggists and wives of the sweltering little prairie towns.

President McLaren spoke a few terse words which were almost inaudible in competition with the hum of fans. It was the first time that Andrews had ever seen him. Rather an antiquated and insignificant little man, he concluded. He listened for a time and then grew interested in watching the deans and professors seated at the back of the stage and attired in the robes of their degree.

The giving out of the diplomas began. One by one the seniors filed across the stage to receive from the president their tightly rolled sheepskin diplomas tied with ribbon in the University colors. Andrews knew but few of them. As they appeared, crossed the stage, stopped, bowed to the president and took their diplomas, there was clapping from parents and friends far back in the auditorium. Sometimes this applause was proud in volume and length and lasted until the figure in cap and gown had merged again into his group.



## TOWN AND GOWN

Several unknowns took their diplomas amid a dead silence that seemed even louder than the clapping had been.

In the case of Dot Ambrose the applause was quite marked and Andrews even thought that he detected in it a note of irony. He watched her curiously until she took her seat again.

He grew nervous as his own turn came near. How many would applaud him?

The man at his right was on the way. Andrews was next. He nervously arranged the tassel of his cap and the skirts of the gown. He must not trip on the steps.

The wings leading to the stage were dark and a stage hand stared stupidly at him as he came up the short flight of stairs. Andrews moistened his lips and stepped out before the State University.

The weary smile of the president, the taking of the diploma in his damp hand, the bow, the crossing to the other side . . . it was all vague to Andrews. But—they had clapped! He had not thought that so many of them would. He had feared a ghastly silence. Sudden moisture hurt his eyelids and he clenched his fists in savage impatience.

He tried to walk nonchalantly back to his seat. It was over—the four years of it.

There were two more hours of the exercises. These last—and often only—appearances of the  
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seniors before their University were becoming monotonous. The clapping grew in listlessness, for it was nearly two o'clock and it was hot. Andrews shifted about miserably in his sticky seat and wished that he were back in the room where he could lie about on the bed in his underwear. Finally the last cap and gown was seated again and the Commencement had ended in a perspiring anti-climax.

Over a white-tiled counter in a restaurant, Andrews ate a belated lunch. He went up to his rooming house and paid Mrs. Weeks the three dollars and forty-five cents he owed her for June, then spent the rest of the afternoon in packing his books for shipment.

Fraternity Row was almost silent as he passed on the way to the train that evening. Only a few seniors and post graduates were there to keep lights in the first floor windows; the second story windows were dark with drawn shades. The street was gloomy. Andrews shifted his heavy suitcase to the other hand. *Four years of it!* Well, he was going now where you didn't get by on drag and where what you really were counted for something.

At the railway station he avoided the meeting of an Engineering student he knew. He checked his suitcase, bought a magazine and a ticket, and seated himself in the crowded waiting room.











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